

DOSSO DOSSI

Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

D O S S O D O S S I



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Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara

Peter Humfrey and Mauro Lucco

*With contributions by Andrea Rothe, Andrea Bayer, Dawson Carr,
Jadranka Bentini, and Anna Coliva*

EDITED BY ANDREA BAYER

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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Organizing Committee

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Diretrice

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Andrea Bayer

Assistant Curator

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Jadranka Bentini

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Direttore

Civiche Gallerie d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Ferrara

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Jayne Wrightsman Curator

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Peter Humfrey

Professor

University of St. Andrews, Scotland

David Jaffé

Curator of Paintings (until August 1998)

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Mauro Lucco

Professore

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Salvatore Settim

Director

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Directors' Foreword

High Renaissance painting is dominated by the names of Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian. Yet working alongside them in styles uniquely their own were a number of slightly lesser geniuses, among whom Dosso Dossi holds a privileged place. His arena was the most famous of all Renaissance courts—the court of the Este in Ferrara—and his art reflects the expansive cultural ambitions and idiosyncratic personalities of that world. A penetrating interpreter of both Giorgione's pastoral vision and Raphael's classicism, Dosso was also an acquaintance of the great poet Ludovico Ariosto, whose wit and poetic vision he shared. While a history of the Renaissance could be written with no mention of Dosso, it would be a drier and less engaging account without his unique voice.

One of Dosso's most enchanting works, *The Three Ages of Man*, and two of his greatest allegories, the *Allegory with Pan* and the *Allegory of Fortune*, are now in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the J. Paul Getty Museum. The three paintings represent Dosso at his finest: lush, sensual, evocative, and mysterious. It is fitting, therefore, that these two institutions should undertake to investigate his brilliant career as preferred artist, from 1514 on, at the court of Duke Alfonso I d'Este. The impetus to organize a monographic exhibition came from the J. Paul Getty Museum's purchase of its second Dosso painting, the newly discovered *Allegory of Fortune*; soon thereafter George Goldner, then the museum's Curator of Paintings, proposed a collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum to present this exceptionally inventive artist to an American public. For the Getty it was an opportunity to highlight important works from their collection in an international exhibition that would inaugurate their new program of major loan exhibitions in Los Angeles. The proposal was greeted with equal enthusiasm by the Metropolitan, whose visitors had already been introduced to Dosso

and his larger artistic world in 1986 in the landmark exhibition "The Age of Correggio and the Carracci." The invitation to Ferrara to open the exhibition was wholeheartedly supported by the Superintendencies of Fine Arts in Bologna and Modena and the Director of the Civic Museums of Ferrara.

An exhibition of Dosso's work is especially meaningful in Ferrara in 1998, when the city is commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of its devolution to the papacy after centuries of Este rule. Following the death of the childless Duke Alfonso II d'Este in 1598, Pope Clement VIII pressed his ancient feudatory rights over the city, and Alfonso's chosen heir, Cesare d'Este, was forced to retreat to Modena (which, along with Reggio Emilia, he continued to rule). The shift in sovereignty had profound effects in Ferrara, a principal one being its impact on the city's artistic patrimony. Paintings were hauled from Ferrara to Rome and into the collections of the Aldobrandini and Borghese families. Ferrara was left with very few works by its sixteenth-century masters: of Dosso Dossi's, only one monumental altarpiece and a handful of smaller paintings. Thus, it will be a great occasion to see reunited in Ferrara two fragments of Dosso's ceiling painting for a room in the Este castle, and to view portions of his splendid Aeneas frieze, which once hung in Alfonso's private chamber alongside the famous *Bacchanals* by Bellini and Titian. The Galleria Borghese in Rome is lending generously from its unsurpassed collection of Dosso's work, and to its administration we extend our thanks. A major exhibition room focusing on the most important painting by Dosso to remain permanently in Ferrara, the Costabili altarpiece, has been organized by Grazia Agostini and Luisa Ciammitti. It will be installed in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, one floor above the exhibition rooms of the Civiche Gallerie d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea where the exhibition is being held.

Well in advance of the exhibition, two seminars entitled “Dosso Dossi and his Age” were cosponsored by the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities and the J. Paul Getty Museum, in conjunction with the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici di Bologna. The first seminar took place in Santa Monica and Malibu, California, May 9–11, 1996. The second was generously hosted by the Provincia Autonoma di Trento and held in the Castello del Bonconsiglio, April 3–5, 1997. These scholarly conferences generated much discussion and promoted the development of ideas over time, greatly enriching both the exhibition and this catalogue. Our special thanks go to Salvatore Settis, Director of the Getty Research Institute, who supported this project from the outset, and especially to Luisa Ciammitti and Amy Morris, who organized both seminars. In conjunction with the opening of the exhibition, the Getty Research Institute has published a volume of selected essays from the seminars, *Dosso’s Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Luisa Ciammitti, Steven F. Ostrow, and Salvatore Settis, which will be an indispensable companion to this volume within the scholarly literature.

In the course of restoring the two paintings in the J. Paul Getty Museum, conservators discovered that Dosso’s working method was extraordinarily fluid and his technique quite individual. The exhibition’s organizers thus determined from the outset to examine as many paintings as possible to build up a technical profile, and this study has proved enormously profitable; its conclusions are published in a three-part essay and in technical observations throughout the catalogue. The study could not have been carried out without a grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and we are profoundly grateful for their support. We are grateful too to Andrea Rothe of the Getty Museum’s Paintings Conservation Department for conducting the complex, time-consuming study, and to Jadranka Bentini and Anna Coliva for analyzing the data on the paintings in their collections.

The organizers were further in agreement that Dosso’s career and development should be

presented in a unified manner, and with a single voice. This was no easy matter, since there is a good deal of controversy about his formation and subsequent chronology. Two scholars who have collaborated in the past, Peter Humfrey and Mauro Lucco, were invited to write the catalogue. They have rethought issues of attribution and chronology and problems of interpretation and have incorporated important new information from a fresh perspective. The result is a presentation of Dosso in a new light, one that confirms his stature as a leading innovator of his generation in Northern Italy, where he holds his own against artists of the rank of Titian and Correggio.

A special thanks is extended to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its assistance toward the realization of this exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum. The exhibition in Ferrara is sponsored by the Cassa di Risparmio and the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Ferrara, which all of the organizers thank for their support, especially at the outset of our endeavor.

Philippe de Montebello
Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

John Walsh
Director, The J. Paul Getty Museum

Andrea Emiliani
Soprintendente per i Beni Artistici e Storici di Bologna, Ferrara, Forlì, Ravenna e Rimini (Emeritus)
and
Anna Maria Colombi Ferretti
Soprintendente Reggente per i Beni Artistici e Storici di Bologna, Ferrara, Forlì, Ravenna e Rimini

Jadranka Bentini
Soprintendente per i Beni Artistici e Storici di Modena e Reggio Emilia

Andrea Buzzoni
Direttore, Civiche Gallerie d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Ferrara

Introduction and Acknowledgments

Throughout the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth, Ferrara's role as a center of both humanist studies and artistic production was quite disproportionate to its size and political power. Successive Este rulers solicited works from artists of the highest stature: Andrea Mantegna, Rogier van der Weyden, Giovanni Bellini, Titian. They also nurtured local painters of great originality, among them Cosmè Tura, Ercole de' Roberti, and Dosso Dossi. Remarkably, most of these artists working at the court of Ferrara did not succumb to the magnetic pull of the city's great neighbors, which principally meant Venice; instead they carved out their own distinctive niche, creating an artistic center the twentieth-century Italian critic Roberto Longhi called the "officina ferrarese," or "Ferrarese workshop."

From 1514 until his death in 1542, Dosso Dossi served as court painter to dukes Alfonso I and Ercole II d'Este and played a critical role in defining the character of Ferrarese painting. His work embodies, to an extraordinary degree, ideas about the nature of art and the artist's imaginative powers that were first articulated in the mid-fifteenth century at the court of Leonello d'Este in the form of a humanist dialogue, one that had an enormous impact on the young Mantegna and on later art criticism. But Dosso was also a leader in the artistic movements of his own day, and here he demonstrated a remarkable ability to assimilate the innovations of artists as diverse as Giorgione and Raphael and yet remain fiercely independent. Dosso was one of the greatest interpreters of those two founders of the High Renaissance in Northern Italy; his success was partly due to the wide latitude allowed him in the protected and sophisticated court environment of Ferrara. When the Ferrarese poet Ludovico Ariosto—author of one of the most renowned epic poems in European literature, *Orlando Furioso*—came to compile a list of the most celebrated artists of

the day, Dosso's name appeared on it along with those of Leonardo da Vinci, Bellini, and Michelangelo. This was not merely local patriotism—what Italians call *campanilismo*—as one contemporary claimed. Rather it stemmed from the empathy Ariosto felt with Dosso's synthetic approach and exaltation of painting as a form of poetry.

In the humanist dialogue that carried so much influence, which was written about 1462 by Angelo Decembrio, a character representing Leonello d'Este expresses his views on art: in the most significant passages, the painter or sculptor is compared to the poet. A favorite ploy of humanist discussion, this kind of comparison, or *paragone*, almost always leads to the victory of the poet, and the instance here is no different. In their ability to describe the complexity of nature, Leonello claims, poets surpass artists: "But let us say no more of the *ingenium* [genius, or individual quality of mind] of writers: it is a divine thing and beyond the reach of painters."

Nonetheless, Leonello acknowledges many areas in which a painter can attain greatness. He admits that a painter is not tied to mundane imitation and can invent images as freely as a poet; he grants both types of creators "equal license to audacity," within proper limits. And he appreciates painted depictions of all the "artifice of Nature," from nude figures to "woods, rivers, mountains, trees, birds, oceans, billowing seas, fish, sea-coasts, clouds in the air, towers and other things of this sort...." It is as if Leonello, who apparently enjoyed competitions, was urging artists to try their hand at something just out of reach; a challenge that was taken up in his day by Mantegna and Jacopo Bellini.

Dosso's achievements correspond precisely to these guidelines. The quality of invention—of personal, indeed audacious, interpretation of subject matter—is exceptionally important in his work, especially in his mythologies and allegories. That the meanings of these great paintings are

sometimes maddeningly elusive is due, first, to his patent dislike of following any single text too closely, and second, to his impulse to alter his compositions in fundamental ways as he worked (on which, see pages 57–60), following the dictates of his searching pictorial imagination.

Furthermore, in his lifetime Dosso was considered a supreme master at depicting the natural world. Vasari wrote that in Lombardy (which for him included much of Northern Italy), Dosso was known as the greatest of all landscape painters. The humanist Paolo Giovio indirectly compared Dosso to an ancient Roman landscape painter, Studius, and called his landscapes *parerga*, works meant to delight. Duke Alfonso commissioned a frieze of sixteen landscapes for his bedroom, now unfortunately lost, and probably owned many of the most spectacular surviving examples of Dosso's landscape painting. These not only capture the sweep of the countryside—shorelines, groves of trees, distant cities and mountains (see cat. no. 38)—but also contain details filled with the vibrancy of life, with masses of foliage that seem to move in the wind and are further animated by the play of light and shadow. Dosso fixes his gaze on elements in the natural world—a lemon, a sliced cucumber, the head of a dog—with an intensity that sometimes makes him seem a precursor of Caravaggio (see cat. nos. 26, 12). The landscape patterns that he developed and repeated have the feel of favorite musical phrases, and they also suggest poetry in the way they are built from a personal vocabulary and composed with a densely rhythmical structure.

In an evocative passage, Longhi tried to suggest Dosso's role as a protagonist of Renaissance painting, writing that the art of Dosso and of a few North Italian contemporaries seemed “to rise in a great smoke from the violet ashes of Giorgione's funeral, ready to mix with the damp fog of the Po valley, which, so often churned up by the north wind blowing from the expressionists north of the Alps, grew clear under the lucid rays of that ancient rhythmic classicism of Central Italy that shone fixedly off to the south.” It is from this powerful mix—the Venetian heritage, local traditions, German art, and Rome—that Dosso's “complex, ardent personality” was forged.

Dosso's intense and lasting study of the art of Venice and of the High Renaissance in Rome is a recurring theme in this catalogue. His earliest works, such as the *Nymph and Satyr* (cat. no. 1), with its reference to Giorgione's *Laura* (fig. 60), show Dosso's fine sensitivity to Giorgione's imagery and to the pictorial qualities of the Venetian painter's work. Other connections located “beneath the skin” of the picture are equally compelling. Technical investigations carried out for this exhibition—in a study that will make a lasting contribution—have demonstrated that Dosso composed his most complex images directly on the canvas, not only changing the details of figure placement but also, apparently, shaping the narrative as he went along. This too may be understood as an extension of Venetian practice. Perhaps the most famous work offering a precedent for the approach is Giorgione's *The Tempest*, a landmark of Venetian painting (fig. 3). X-radiographs of the painting published in 1939 showed that beneath the surface on the left side, where the soldier now stands, is the figure of a nude woman. It is difficult to tell whether she was intended as an additional figure or was a first thought for the woman we now see suckling her child on the right. Later infrared reflectograms have shown, further, that the broken columns at the center of the picture, often thought of as symbolic, were once twice as high, and a prominent square tower stood behind them. These shifts and transformations inspired a memorable description by Kenneth Clark of *The Tempest* as a “free fantasy, a sort of Kubla Khan . . . x-rays have shown us that Giorgione was an improviser, who changed his pictures as he went along.” Debate has circled endlessly around the subject and meaning of Giorgione's picture: the earliest commentator called it “a gypsy woman with a soldier,” which does not take us very far, and some critics have even suggested that there is no true subject (a view that now seems unlikely). But the way the picture was painted and the enigma of its meaning go hand in hand.

None of this is surprising to a student of Dosso's paintings. Dosso too composed directly on the canvas, without a scheme drawn out

beforehand—almost no drawings can be attributed to him with any certainty—but with his thought process revealed in the paint layers themselves. In the *Allegory with Pan* in the Getty Museum (cat. no. 38), the standing female figure was painted out by the artist, and the figure of Pan was added over an already-complete landscape (see figs. 87, 88); these were only the major alterations. What new purpose can have intervened to cause the removal of one protagonist and the addition of another? As with *The Tempest*, there is no ready explanation of the subject in *any* of its incarnations: perhaps Dosso chose in the end to illustrate a different moment of the tale that first inspired the picture; or perhaps the tale is his own creation, a web woven of interrelated sources (again, analogous to Renaissance poetry). And, remarkably, the painting called *Mythological Allegory* (cat. no. 39) continues the process begun in the *Allegory with Pan*. Some of the same figures appear in this picture, and here too, a now-obliterated figure, quite different in mood from those remaining, was once an integral element of the narrative and composition.

A painting of a sorceress in the Galleria Borghese (cat. no. 12) underwent a development that yields more readily to analysis and is discussed in this volume by Anna Coliva and Mauro Lucco. An x-radiograph has shown that a knight once stood next to the sorceress but was replaced by a suit of armor on the ground, a bird, and a splendid dog. The sorceress is a sensuous, exotic creature who must be one of Ariosto's creations: perhaps Alcina, who seduces paladins and, when she tires of them, transforms them into trees and beasts; or, more likely, her alter ego Melissa, who releases the victims. Thus, Dosso first conceived of the scene as a colloquy between knight and sorceress, but he changed his mind and illustrated the captive still enchanted. The picture, one of the artist's most memorable, can scarcely be imagined any differently; nonetheless, its central conception was in flux until the last moment. With its pastoral imagery, rich and glowing palette, and wonderful sensitivity to the play of light on metal or vegetation, this work gorgeously exemplifies the direction a painter under the spell of

Giorgione could take in the decade following the Venetian master's death.

Indeed, the description Vasari gave of Giorgione's working method (found at the beginning of Vasari's Life of Titian) applies perfectly to Dosso. According to this account, Giorgione began painting directly from the model, "without the study of drawing on paper." Vasari was critical of this method, believing that it prevented Venetian artists from reaching the level of perfection of their Florentine or Roman peers. It did not allow the artist to try his composition out in several different ways, "to see how the whole goes together." But Giorgione, and following him, Dosso, clearly believed that goal could be achieved in the act of painting, as the successive layers on their canvases demonstrate.

Yet Dosso's continuation of Giorgionesque precedent did not preclude his absorbing the achievements of the Roman High Renaissance. A letter Raphael wrote in 1519 contains a phrase implying that he and Dosso were then well acquainted, and it has always been assumed that about that time Dosso made his way to Rome. This would explain why some of his paintings usually dated to the early 1520s seem to be personal musings on the late works of Raphael and on Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling. It now seems clear, however, that Dosso's introduction to the Roman world came earlier than heretofore believed and led to even more interesting results.

Key in this regard are newly discovered documents showing that the great Costabili altarpiece (cat. no. 6) painted by Dosso and his compatriot Garofalo was well under way by 1513–14 rather than a decade later, as was previously believed. (These documents are the basis for a rethinking of Dosso's early chronology; their repercussions are discussed at various points throughout this catalogue.) The altarpiece is a remarkable work for such an early date, not just for what it suggests of the talents of the two artists, but as a landmark in the broader context of painting in North Italy. The monumentality of its figures, their solidity and ability to move through space, are noteworthy—a good example is the pose of the seated Saint John the

Evangelist. The composition too is spatially dynamic: in the central panel, a boldly hemispherical band of clouds is occupied by angels; in the spandrels, gesticulating saints fully occupy their mysterious dark corners, the walls of which are punched through by oculi showing clouds beyond. With these features, the painting relates to Raphael's works in Florence and his early works in Rome (particularly the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican). The Costabili altarpiece demonstrates its artists' ability to translate Raphael's pictorial ideas into an idiom that at the same time remained closely tied to Giorgione and Venetian art. Thus, Dosso was in the front ranks in disseminating the great innovations of the Roman High Renaissance. One would be hard-pressed to think of another altarpiece north of the Apennines that in 1514 could have made so powerful and novel a statement.

Alfonso I d'Este, Dosso's principal patron, sought and secured the promise of a painting from Michelangelo, received gifts of drawings and cartoons from Raphael, and captured Titian's attention for a decade. That this man was more than content to have Dosso Dossi as his court painter is testimony to the artist's great gifts. Alfonso recognized Dosso's imaginative powers, his canny understanding of the innovations of his great contemporaries, and his gifts as a painter of nature. No doubt the duke also appreciated the wit, joyousness, and pictorial freedom of Dosso's pictures—qualities that will be abundantly evident to visitors at this exhibition.

Andrea Bayer
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The organizers have many people to thank, beginning with George Goldner, who first proposed an exhibition on Dosso Dossi while he was Curator of Paintings at the J. Paul Getty Museum. He and Keith Christiansen invited Peter Humfrey and Mauro Lucco to be the principal authors of the catalogue, and they have been the best of collaborators. All of us are very grateful for the assistance and support we received over the last three years from

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Andrea Buzzoni
Civiche Gallerie d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Ferrara

Dawson W. Carr
The J. Paul Getty Museum

DOS SO DOSSI



Dosso Dossi: His Life and Works

PETER HUMFREY

Except for a brief and obscure early period, Dosso Dossi (1486?–1542) spent his entire career serving as court painter to two successive dukes of Ferrara, Alfonso I d'Este (r. 1505–34) and his son Ercole II (r. 1534–59).¹ As is vividly documented in surviving accounts of the ducal household, Dosso's post involved him in a wide range of artistic tasks, including producing the works expected of most Italian painters of the period: large-scale decoration, easel pictures both large and small, and portraits. In addition, he was responsible for much of the display that surrounded the pleasures and pageantry of a glittering Renaissance court, and accounts show that he and his team of assistants were ceaselessly employed in such varied activities as the design of theater sets and tapestries, the provision of banners for trumpets and flags for ships, the gilding of woodwork in the duke's private apartments, and the polychroming and varnishing of carriages. The fruits of much of this labor were never intended to be more than ephemeral. Moreover, when the duchy, left without a legitimate heir, devolved to the papacy in 1598, the tragic despoilment of Ferrara resulted in serious further losses of Dosso's lifework, in particular of the many frescoes he had painted both inside and on the exteriors of ducal palaces and villas. With the devolution also came the wholesale dispersal of Dosso's easel pictures. It is a sobering thought that, with the conspicuous exception of the monumental Costabili polyptych from the church of Sant'Andrea (cat. no. 6), virtually nothing by Dosso remains today in the city where he lived and worked for three decades.

Vasari's brief biography of Dosso, published in 1568, begins with the rhetorical observation, "At almost the same time that Heaven bestowed on Ferrara and the world the divine poet Ariosto, the painter Dosso was born in the same city."² On the strength of this remark it was long assumed that the painter was born in 1479 (an

arbitrary five years after Ariosto), but twentieth-century research has shown that Vasari was mistaken about both the place and the date of Dosso's birth. Dosso's father, Niccolò di Luteri, was originally from Trent; by the final decades of the fifteenth century he was living, it has very recently been discovered, at a place called Tramuschio in the small city-state of Mirandola, just south of the Po River, close to the borders of both the duchy of Ferrara and the marquessate of Mantua.³ In the earliest document to record Dosso's presence in Ferrara, dated July 1513, the painter is called Dosso of Mirandola.

Dosso's real name was Giovanni Francesco. The nickname Dosso was apparently derived from the name of a small family property near Quistello, within Mantuan territory and not far from Tramuschio. Dosso's younger brother Battista, also a painter, is referred to in contemporary documents as Battista del Dosso or Battista Dossi, and in the eighteenth century, local historians erroneously concluded from this that the brothers' family name was Dossi; hence the doubled form "Dosso Dossi," which in fact is both anomalous and anachronistic.

Vasari's statement about Dosso's date of birth was first seriously challenged in 1934 by Roberto Longhi, who reasonably deduced that since the painter's career did not begin until about 1510, he is unlikely to have been born much before 1490.⁴ This new proposed birthdate quickly won general acceptance. It probably should be slightly modified, however, since a recently discovered legal document implies that the painter had reached the majority age of twenty-five by June 1512, which would mean that he was born sometime before June 1487.⁵ If Dosso was born about 1486, as now seems likely, he would have been slightly younger than Raphael (1483–1520) but slightly older than the other great painter who most inspired his mature art, Titian (1488/90–1576).

The only documented record of Dosso's artistic activity before he first appeared in Ferrara in July 1513 dates from April of the previous year, when he was paid for painting "a large picture with eleven figures" for the Palace of San Sebastiano in Mantua, the favorite residence of Alfonso d'Este's brother-in-law Francesco II Gonzaga, marchese of Mantua.⁶ Although there have been attempts to prove that this picture is *The Bath* in the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome, a work attributed to Dosso by Longhi, there are compelling arguments against the identification (see entry for cat. no. 55). Dosso's earliest documented work, evidently a commission of major importance, must therefore be regarded as lost. The artist's early contact with Mantua lends some credence to Vasari's report that Dosso was a pupil of the Ferrarese painter Lorenzo Costa,⁷ who became court painter at Mantua in 1506/7, succeeding Andrea Mantegna; on the other hand, Dosso has nothing in common with Costa stylistically, and any time he spent in the older master's studio must have been brief. Indeed, to judge from what are probably his earliest surviving works (cat. nos. 1, 2), datable to about 1508–10, the young Dosso had already spent several years working in Venice, deeply immersed in the art of Giorgione, before undertaking his Mantuan commission of 1511/12.

Perhaps as early as the summer of 1512, and certainly by July 1513, Dosso had settled in Ferrara. This is proved by a recent and very important archival discovery which shows that in that month the painter and his slightly older Ferrarese colleague Benvenuto da Garofalo (1481–1559) received initial payments for their work on the polyptych for the high altar of Sant'Andrea in Ferrara, commissioned by the ducal counselor Antonio Costabili (cat. no. 6). Further payments were made in November, and there is circumstantial evidence that the work was completed early in 1514.⁸ Dosso's contribution to the polyptych, while intensely Venetian in character, also displays a knowledge of the early Roman works (ca. 1508–12) of Raphael, and this fact strongly suggests that by then Dosso's artistic education had included a trip to Rome—perhaps in the entourage of Duke

Alfonso, who went there to attend the coronation of Pope Leo X in March 1513.⁹ A direct personal acquaintance between the two painters is certainly implied in a message conveyed by Raphael in March 1520,¹⁰ and in January of the same year Battista was recorded as working in Raphael's workshop.

Although Dosso may never have returned to Rome after this putative early visit, he made frequent trips beyond Ferrara and clearly kept in close contact with the latest artistic developments—in Central Italy, in other parts of Northern Italy, and in Northern Europe. Thus, he is known to have visited Venice at least once a year between 1516 and 1519; in 1517 he also went to Florence; and in 1519 he visited Mantua with Titian to study the distinguished collection of Isabella d'Este, sister of Alfonso and mother of the new marchese, Federico II Gonzaga. Dosso was also kept abreast of outside developments by the visits to Ferrara of eminent foreign artists such as Fra Bartolommeo (1516), Michelangelo (1529), and Giulio Romano (1535), and especially by Titian's regular periodic presence there throughout the later teens and 1520s to carry out a series of *Bacchanals* for Duke Alfonso's Camerino. Although Raphael never visited the city, Dosso would have been able to study his later Roman style from the two full-scale cartoons—one for a fresco in the Stanza dell'Incendio in the Vatican Palace, one for the *Saint Michael* sent to the king of France and now in the Louvre—that arrived in Ferrara as gifts for Alfonso in 1517 and 1518, respectively.¹¹ About the works that stimulated Dosso's interest in Northern European developments much less is known; but since the days of Leonello d'Este in the mid-fifteenth century, the lords of Ferrara had shown a keen appreciation of Flemish painting, and Duke Alfonso would certainly have shared the taste, widespread among Italian aristocratic collectors, for landscape pictures by Patinir and his school.¹² Similarly, Dosso must have had easy access to the widely diffused woodcuts and engravings of such German masters as Albrecht Dürer and Albrecht Altdorfer.

Dosso was employed at the Ferrarese court on a piecemeal rather than a salaried basis,

leaving him free to undertake attractive commissions from outsiders. For example, at least three of his most important altarpieces were painted for patrons in Modena, a city of which Alfonso d'Este was also nominally duke but which between 1512 and 1527 was under papal rule. While it was probably Dosso's habit to pay a brief visit to the destined site of an altarpiece at the time he undertook a commission, the recently published documents on the great *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece for Modena Cathedral (fig. 1) suggest that he actually executed such works in his studio in Ferrara and shipped them when they were completed.¹³ A commissioned fresco, in contrast, obviously had to be painted on the spot, and on two recorded occasions, Dosso, together with his brother Battista and other assistants, received the duke's permission to be absent from Ferrara for a period of several months in order to undertake fresco decorations for a foreign dignitary. The first of these was during the first half of 1530, when Dosso had been invited by Eleonora, duchess of Urbino (daughter of Isabella d'Este and niece of Alfonso), to participate in the decoration of the ducal Villa Imperiale outside Pesaro along with several other North and Central Italian painters, including Raffaellino del Colle, Camillo Mantovano, and the young Bronzino. Dosso and Battista painted at least one room in the villa, the surviving Sala delle Cariatidi, and there is evidence that they also worked in the neighboring Sala dei Semibusti and in a third room, probably the Sala Grande. In this last room, however, their work was subsequently destroyed or altered beyond recognition.¹⁴

Dosso's second long absence from home was between the summers of 1531 and 1532, when he was involved in the decoration of a whole series of rooms—mainly working on ceilings and friezes on the upper parts of walls—in the splendid new palace built by the cardinal-bishop of Trent, Bernardo Cles.¹⁵ It is known that the cultivated and widely traveled cardinal greatly admired Mantua and Ferrara as models of the Renaissance court, and he seems to have placed particular value on the services of Dosso, as an artist with a broad, pan-Italian experience, highly skilled, and possessing the decorative and



iconographic inventiveness required for secular fresco decoration. Indeed, the ingenuity, wit, and capacity for variety demonstrated by Dosso at the Villa Imperiale and at Trent inspire keen regret over the loss of the more extensive fresco decorations he executed in and around Ferrara.

Of the painter's later years, Vasari says: "When Dosso became old he spent his final years without working, since to the end of his days he enjoyed a pension provided by Duke Alfonso."¹⁶ It is true that after Dosso's return from Trent in 1532, his name appears less frequently in the ducal accounts; and that in the fourth decade, his increasing collaboration with Battista and other members of his workshop often results in a blurred image of his own artistic personality. But documents have shown this statement of Vasari's too to be highly misleading. When Dosso died in 1542 he was still comparatively young; seven years earlier both his parents were

Fig. 1. Dosso Dossi, *Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints John the Baptist, Sebastian, and Jerome* (the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece). Oil on panel. Duomo, Modena

still alive and the youngest of his three young daughters was only three.¹⁷ Furthermore, after Alfonso died in 1534, Dosso unquestionably continued to work for his son and successor, Ercole II. It was under Duke Ercole, for example, that Dosso painted frescoes for the Este villas of Belriguardo and Belvedere in 1536 and 1537; similarly, it was under Duke Ercole that, in the spring of 1540, he produced his late masterpiece *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan* (cat. no. 43).

EARLIEST WORKS

While the documentation of Dosso's career at the Ferrarese court is exceptionally rich, only a tiny number of the documents refer to surviving works. Since, moreover, not a single picture by Dosso is inscribed with a date, the artist's chronology is extremely difficult to reconstruct, and scholars have assigned his works a bewildering variety of dates.¹⁸ Until very recently his earliest datable work was the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece (fig. 1), which was officially installed in Modena Cathedral in 1522.¹⁹ Thus, the question of how Dosso's art developed before that date, during the crucial first decade of his career, is particularly difficult to answer.

Central to the conception of the young Dosso that has prevailed for the greater part of the twentieth century is a group of works dis-

cussed in print in the years 1928–34 by Roberto Longhi, especially the *Holy Family with the Young Saint John, a Cat, and Two Donors* in Philadelphia (cat. no. 57), *The Bath at the Castel Sant'Angelo* in Rome (cat. no. 55), and the *Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist, Saint Barbara, and a Donor* in Naples (cat. no. 56).²⁰ To this assemblage a number of other pictures were later added, the most important of which are *A Bacchanal* in London (fig. 2), sometimes hypothetically linked with Alfonso's Camerino, and the *Madonna and Child in Glory with Five Saints* from the church of Santa Maria in Vado in Ferrara (cat. no. 58).²¹ All of these pictures, especially the first three named, are generically Titianesque in character but also show links with the artistic cultures of various cities in the Po valley, including Ferrara. They were considered by Longhi and most subsequent scholars to represent a phase of Dosso's career up to about 1515–17, during which he slowly emerged from the shadow of Titian, who was thought to have been his master in Venice. Only thereafter, according to this version of events, did Dosso develop the distinctive style that has always been associated with him and that appears in an already mature form in the documented *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece. Since it and Dosso's other mature pictures reveal a deep interest not only in the art of Titian but also in the Roman works of Raphael and Michelangelo, it was further supposed that Dosso visited Rome in about 1520 (Mezzetti) and perhaps three years earlier as well (Ballarin).²²

Yet not all scholars were convinced that the Longhi group was by Dosso,²³ and the skeptics have now been proved right by the discovery that the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6)—a stylistically mature work previously dated usually to the 1530s, and never earlier than 1522—was in fact painted in 1513, at the very beginning of Dosso's career in Ferrara. In other words, since the “immature” works of the Longhi group can no longer plausibly be described as pictures made by Dosso after 1513—and, for many reasons, cannot date from much before that year—their attribution to Dosso has to be abandoned, and with it the supposition that he trained under Titian.

The traditional late dating of the polyptych emphasizes how modern it must have appeared

Fig. 2. Attributed to Dosso Dossi, *A Bacchanal*. Oil on canvas. © National Gallery, London





Fig. 3. Giorgione, *The Tempest*. Oil on canvas. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

in the context of Ferrarese, indeed of North Italian, painting at the beginning of the second decade of the sixteenth century. The parts of the work most convincingly attributed to Dosso include the central Virgin and Child, the landscape and saints at the right, the Saint George panel, Saints Ambrose and Augustine in the spandrels, and the resurrected Christ at the apex; Garofalo was clearly responsible for the Saint Sebastian panel and the angelic glory above the Virgin. In Dosso's contributions, the warmth and richness of the color, the poetic mood created by nocturnal or crepuscular lighting, and the suggestive breadth of pictorial handling all confirm his deep immersion in the art of the older Venetian master Giorgione and in developments within Venetian painting in and around the first decade of the century. Particularly close to Giorgione's work is the highly romantic figure of Saint George, who, his armor glinting in the twilight and his youthful, handsome face in half shadow, recalls his counterpart in Giorgione's early Castelfranco altarpiece (Duomo, Castelfranco); similarly, George's long, tousled curls and over-the-shoulder appeal to the spectator find a striking precedent in Giorgione's *Self-Portrait as David* (fragment; Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig), probably

painted shortly before the artist's premature death in 1510. On the other hand, the fact that the windswept, atmospherically charged landscape background is even more dynamically composed and loosely painted than that in its ultimate source of inspiration, Giorgione's *Tempest* of about 1505 (fig. 3), indicates that Dosso also knew post-Giorgionesque works of Titian, such as the frescoes of 1510–11 for the Scuola del Santo in Padua or the *Noli Me Tangere* of about 1511–12 (National Gallery, London).

In addition it seems clear that, as suggested above, Dosso had already been to Rome, probably directly before undertaking the commission or perhaps even during the course of its execution. Thus, certain motifs associated with the Virgin (the golden fringe of her cloak and the back of her throne, the embossed neckline of her robe, the red tassels suspended by the angels) echo similar ones that had recently been depicted by Raphael in such works as the *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 4) and the *Portrait of Pope Julius II* (National Gallery, London), while the foreground figures of a standing Saint Jerome and a cross-legged Saint John the Evangelist signal their maker's direct experience of Raphael's



Fig. 4. Raphael, *Madonna of Foligno*. Oil on panel. Pinacoteca, Vatican Museums

Stanza della Segnatura frescoes. (By contrast, Dosso's contributions to the Costabili polyptych owe little or nothing to any painters currently active in Ferrara—not to Domenico Panetti, Niccolò Pisano, Ludovico Mazzolini, or even Dosso's slightly older collaborator Garofalo.)

In 1513 Dosso would have been in his mid-twenties, with a good five years of independent work behind him. It is reasonable to suppose that the pictures he painted in those earliest years were more purely in the style of Giorgione than his contributions to the Costabili polyptych and did not yet reflect the impact of Titian, or of Raphael. Likely candidates for such works are the *Nymph and Satyr* (cat. no. 1), the *Buffoon* (cat. no. 2), and *Circe and Her Lovers* (cat. no. 3). The last of these may be the clearest guide we possess to the style that Dosso was practicing in 1512, when he painted his lost picture for the court of Mantua.²⁴

ASSIMILATION AND ORIGINALITY: STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT 1513 TO 1530

The Costabili polyptych provides a new anchor point of about 1513–16 for a series of mostly small-scale works, hitherto dated somewhat later, which closely resemble the polyptych in their highly personal synthesis of Giorgione and the earliest Titian (cat. nos. 7–15). Several of these pictures, in which luxuriant, thickly wooded landscapes threaten to overwhelm the small figures, also reflect Dosso's evident fascination at this stage of his career with German prints, especially those of Altdorfer. This series of early works may be thought of as culminating in *Melissa* (cat. no. 12), in which a new grandeur of form, opulence of color and texture, and lush, sensuous landscape setting constitute an updated response to Venetian painting—stimulated, perhaps, by Titian's visit to Ferrara in the spring of 1516²⁵ and by Dosso's own trip to Venice the same year. Conversely, Dosso's interest in Raphael receded somewhat during this period; and although the pose struck by Melissa, with her outstretched sandaled foot, vaguely recalls that of Raphael's *Alba Madonna* of about 1512 (fig. 5), it remains, unlike Raphael's



Fig. 5. Raphael, *Alba Madonna*. Oil on canvas, transferred from panel. © 1997 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Andrew W. Mellon Collection



Fig. 6. Dosso Dossi, *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael*, originally in the church of Sant'Agostino, Modena. Oil on panel. Galleria Estense, Modena



Fig. 7. Dosso Dossi, *Adoration of the Magi*. Oil on panel. © National Gallery, London

far more complex figure, simple and frontal.

The intermediate work that marks the transition from a figure like Melissa to the complicated stance and athletic display of nudity in the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece, which documents date to 1518–21, appears to be another altarpiece painted for the city of Modena, the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* (fig. 6), which is known to have come to the Este collection in the seventeenth century from the church of Sant'Agostino. It is, however, undated.²⁶ In this magnificent picture, arguably Dosso's finest altarpiece, the pose of Saint George, resplendent in gleaming armor, remains straightforward; but the Virgin's posture, while somewhat resembling Melissa's, is much more energetic, with her hips and shoulders turned and seen in depth. Similarly, the contrapposto of the sturdily built Saint Michael, his right arm trailing back into space, is far more complex than, for example, that of Saint Jerome in the Costabili polyptych. Dosso's appreciation for

the heroic and dynamic figure style of Central Italian art may have gained its decisive impetus from the visit he made in 1517 to Florence, where he could have seen the fragments of Michelangelo's cartoon for the *Battle of Cascina*, a classic manifesto of High Renaissance preoccupations. In the same year Dosso also returned to Venice, where Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin* (Santa Maria dei Frari, Venice) would have been visible at an advanced stage of its execution. Dosso's continuing, essential debt to Venetian painting remains evident in the Modena altarpiece's blaze of color and its rapidly sketched, poetically evocative landscape.

If indeed datable to about 1517–18, the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* provides an approximate date for a group of smaller pictures in which a similar treatment of color and landscape is evident (see cat. nos. 14, 17). In the *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 7), for example, the twisting poses of the foreground figures show a comparable formal ambition, while the



Fig. 8. Dosso Dossi, *Saint Sebastian*, originally from the church of the Santissima Annunziata, Cremona. Oil on panel. Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan



Fig. 9. Dosso and Battista Dossi, *Immaculate Conception with the Fathers of the Church*, originally in the Duomo, Modena. Oil on panel. Formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed in 1945)

astonishing landscape, with its huge harvest moon, marks an apogee of Dosso's development of the magical light effects learned from Giorgione.²⁷ Already by 1518–21, however, the period when he painted the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece, Dosso's interest in Michelangelo had advanced a stage further, as is clear from the truly Herculean proportions of its trio of male nudes.²⁸ Unmistakably Michelangelesque too is the tension between the illusion of forms in space, heightened by the ample gestures of Saints John and Sebastian, and the opposing effect of a two-dimensional pattern, created by the emphasis on compact silhouettes and the linking of forms across the picture plane. An analogous display of Michelangelism in the set of monumental nudes that constitute the Learned Men of Classical Antiquity (cat. no. 22) and, on a smaller scale, in the Aeneas frieze Dosso painted for Duke

Alfonso's Camerino (cat. no. 24), suggests that these works are datable to about the same time as the *Saint Sebastian*.

Venetian elements are still prominent in the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece. Although the landscape background employs colors more muted than those used in Dosso's immediately preceding phase, it remains gentle and atmospheric; the flesh of the saints, sensuous and soft, is similarly un-Michelangelesque. There is ostentatious virtuosity in the brushwork of Sebastian's dark-green-and-gold loincloth, with its thickly impastoed gold fringes, as there was earlier with the gorgeous damask drapery on the lap of Melissa. But the equilibrium between Venetian and Central Italian values had begun to shift toward the latter by about the mid-1520s, as is demonstrated by a fragmentary section representing a man embracing a woman from a ceil-

ing painting Dosso executed for an apartment in the Via Coperta in 1524–26 (cat. no. 32a). In the figure of the woman, the drawing is sharper, the flesh more marmoreal, and the color more metallic than in the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece; these tendencies may be interpreted as Dosso's response to the arrival of Raphael's artistic heir Giulio Romano, who came from Rome to the neighboring court of Mantua in 1524. Datable for the same reason to the same moment are two imposing male figures, the Borghese *Apollo* (cat. no. 28) and another *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece, this one painted for the church of the Santissima Annunziata in Cremona (fig. 8). The contorted yet planar pose seen in the latter work is then developed further in the Della Sale altarpiece depicting Saints John the Evangelist and Bartholomew (fig. 76), dated, by external evidence, about 1526, and always recognized as one of Dosso's most self-consciously Romanizing works.²⁹

Another key painting in what may be termed Dosso's Giuliesque phase, and that in turn helps date major, stylistically related pictures such as the *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38), is the altarpiece commissioned in 1527 for the altar of the Immaculate Conception in Modena Cathedral (fig. 9). Although this picture was destroyed in Dresden in 1945, it is clear from photographs that the foreground figures were executed with a plastic firmness and a precision of detail quite different from the atmospheric sensuousness of the earlier *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece across the nave in the same building; and that even more than in the Della Sale altarpiece, the poses, while active, had become frozen and stylized, comparable to those in Giulio Romano's contemporaneous fresco *The Banquet of Cupid and Psyche* painted in the Palazzo del Te, Mantua, about 1526–28 (fig. 10). The background in the *Immaculate Conception*, consisting of a panoramic view of a distant seaport, likewise differed markedly from Dosso's earlier landscapes, in which a misty horizon is only occasionally glimpsed beyond prominent trees and bushes in the fore- and middle ground; this new type of vista also had parallels in Giulio's *Banquet*, specifically in the seascape in the left background.³⁰

DOSSO AND BATTISTA

In the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece, the execution of the upper part is conspicuously weaker than that of the large-scale saints below, and the same can be said of the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece. It is natural to assume that responsibility for these subordinate elements was undertaken by Dosso's brother and chief assistant, Battista. It should, however, be kept in mind that, as documents record, Dosso had several other long-term assistants, including Tommaso da Carpi, father of the painter Girolamo da Carpi,³¹ and one Albertino. Another likely pupil and assistant was Sebastiano Filippi, father of the painter Camillo and grandfather of Bastianino. Thus, not every picture or part of a picture in the style of Dosso that seems too weak to be by the artist himself should automatically be assigned to Battista. Yet there remain serious problems in attempting to make attributions to particular hands within the Dosso shop. There exists no basis at all on which to identify either Albertino or Tommaso; Sebastiano is known by two signed works (see fig. 108), and his personality has only just begun to be reconstructed (see entries for cat. nos. 56, 57);³² and even the handful of documented works by Battista all belong to the end of his career, the years between Dosso's death in 1542 and his own in 1548.

Nevertheless, one of these works, the *Allegory of Justice* (fig. 11), for which Battista received payment in 1544,³³ may serve to illustrate some

Fig. 10. Giulio Romano, *The Banquet of Cupid and Psyche*, detail. Fresco. West wall, Camera di Psiche, Palazzo del Te, Mantua





Fig. 11. Battista Dossi, *Allegory of Justice*. Oil on canvas. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Fig. 13. Battista Dossi,
*Holy Family with the
Infant Saint John the
Baptist*. Oil on canvas.
Fondazione Giorgio
Cini, Venice

of the abiding traits of his own style and help identify his other autograph pictures. The undocumented *Virgin and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome* from Portomaggiore (fig. 12),



Fig. 12. Battista Dossi, *Virgin and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome*, originally in the Duomo, Portomaggiore. Oil on canvas, transferred from panel. Pinacoteca, Ferrara



for example, shares a number of stylistic characteristics with the *Justice*: rigid, awkwardly articulated figures, with sausagelike fingers; a pedantically descriptive foreground; foliage of flat, decorative leaves; a misty and generically Dossesque background, with groups of buildings and improbably vertical rocks; and a bland, uniform handling of paint within a comparatively light color range.³⁴ A comparison between the Madonna group of the Portomaggiore altarpiece and the compositionally closely related group in Dosso's vigorous *Virgin and Child with Saint Virgilio Presenting Bishop Bernardo Cles*, a fresco painted in the Magno Palazzo at Trent in 1531–32, confirms that the altarpiece is by Battista and suggests that it dates from soon afterward, perhaps about 1533–35; the altarpiece would then precede the *Justice* by about a decade. That the earlier picture is much fresher and more accomplished as a work of art than the later one further suggests that Battista's talent went into decline after about 1540. Indeed, on an intimate

scale, Battista had painted some pictures of rather high quality in a style quite distinct from Dosso's—like the Cini *Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 13), which may have been made soon after the Portomaggiore altarpiece, perhaps in the mid- to late 1530s.

Battista's earlier career, before about 1530, is even harder to trace. His existence is first recorded in 1517, when he was paid for the modest task of painting masks; and three years later, in January 1520, he was working, probably for only a brief period, in Raphael's workshop in Rome. The impression that he was considerably younger than Dosso, perhaps as much as ten years, seems confirmed by documents of May 6, 1521, concerning the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece, in which the Modenese patrons refer to a payment made "in presenzia del fiolo de magistro Dosso,"³⁵ apparently mistaking Battista for Dosso's nonexistent son. Battista's involvement in this commission in a managerial capacity implies that he also participated in the execution of the altarpiece; indeed, the striking difference between the powerful, monumentally scaled saints below and the much less articulate Madonna group above suggests that Battista was chiefly responsible for the latter. A plausible candidate for an independent work by Battista of about this time might be the now badly abraded but nevertheless sweetly intimate *Holy Family with a Shepherd* in Cleveland (fig. 64).³⁶ Several elements in this rustic idyll, including the treatment of the throne back, the ambitiously twisting pose given to the Child, and especially the sweeping curve of the Virgin's veil, clearly reflect Battista's probably recent experience in Raphael's workshop. At the same time, the thick undergrowth and swaying tree in the background remain close to Dosso's landscapes of the first decade and do not yet resemble the panoramic landscapes that will become Battista's hallmark later, most likely toward the end of the 1520s. That slightly later phase is represented by such works as the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen* (cat. no. 52) and a *Flight into Egypt* in Coral Gables (fig. 14), both, with their fantastic vertical rocks and bird's-eye views over distant harbors, clearly inspired by Flemish landscapes in the style of Patinir (fig. 85). In this reading of Battista's development, the painter began about 1530 to under-



Fig. 14. Battista Dossi, *Flight into Egypt*. Oil on panel. The Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

take large-scale, independent works such as the Portomaggiore altarpiece, which can be interpreted as a grander, more mature version of the Cleveland *Holy Family*.

It obviously becomes much more difficult to distinguish between Dosso and Battista in works where they collaborated extensively, such as the frescoes at Trent (1531–32)³⁷ and a pair of altarpieces commissioned by Duke Alfonso in 1533 to celebrate the return of the cities Reggio and Modena to Este rule. Recorded payments for those altarpieces, depicting, respectively, Saint Michael (fig. 26) and a votive Nativity, were made only to Dosso; but when the *Votive Nativity* was installed in Modena Cathedral in 1536, the local chronicler Lancellotti specified that it had been executed by "M.^ro... fratello de M.^ro Dosso"—in other words, by Battista.³⁸ This is clearly the case with the foreground figures, which closely resemble those of the Portomaggiore altarpiece, and, indeed, help establish the close chronological proximity of the two works. But the composition of the *Votive Nativity* as a whole shows a dynamism lacking in the Portomaggiore altarpiece, and the landscapes in the two paintings are quite unlike; these factors imply Dosso's significant intervention in the *Votive Nativity*.³⁹ However, the collaboration between the brothers did not necessarily always follow the same pattern. In

Hercules and the Pygmies (cat. no. 40), for example, likewise datable on external grounds to the mid-1530s, the figure of Hercules shows qualities of design and execution that point clearly to Dosso, while the landscape—much closer to that of the Portomaggiore altarpiece than that of the *Votive Nativity*—can comfortably be attributed to Battista.

LATE WORKS

While the majority of surviving pictures by Dosso datable to the last decade of his life may be regarded as works of more or less extensive collaboration, there is a small, stylistically coherent group, probably painted in the later 1530s, in which it appears that Battista had no hand. The key works for this group are a pair of standing saints, *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint George* (fig. 15), which once served as the wings of a triptych in the church of San Paolo in Massa Lombarda, to the south of Ferrara toward Ravenna. In 1535, lordship over this town was given to Duke Ercole's younger brother Francesco d'Este, who rebuilt the church of San Paolo and endowed several of its altars; circumstantial evidence confirming that the Dosso wings were commissioned as part of this campaign comes from the date 1538 inscribed on a companion piece, Garofalo's *Resurrection* (Ospedale, Massa Lombarda).⁴⁰ In the wing paintings, very different from anything seen in all Dosso's earlier works are the heavy muscularity of the two saints, the sharpness of contours, the naturalism verging on coarseness, and especially the blackness of the shadows. The same traits are to be found in at least two other pictures, both of which show a similar tension between large-scale, emphatically plastic forms and a dark, spaceless background: the *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41) and the *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42). As noted, the *Allegory of Hercules* incorporates a half-length format, contemporary dress, and an undefined background, elements familiar from poetic genre paintings by Giorgione such as the so-called *Three Ages of Man* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence), while also displaying the harsh realism, overt sensuality, and ironic humor later found in late-sixteenth-



Fig. 15. Dosso Dossi, *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint George*, originally in the church of San Paolo, Massa Lombarda. Oil on panel. Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

century lowlife pictures by such North Italian painters as Bartolomeo Passerotti, Vincenzo Campi, and the young Annibale Carracci; thus it represents an important link, across the century, between these two modes.⁴¹ Similarly, the sharply lit still-life objects on the foreground parapet in the *Allegory of Hercules* and the cornucopia of fruit and grain in the *Allegory of Fortune* anticipate early works by Caravaggio—for instance, the *Boy with a Basket of Fruit* (Galleria Borghese, Rome) and the *Bacchus* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), both of about 1589—and even still-life painting in seventeenth-century Spain.⁴² Dosso's late works of this type, far removed in style from the predominant Titianism of his early maturity, demonstrate not only that the painter remained active to the end of his life but also that he never ceased to expand the boundaries of his art, in ways that were to inspire future generations of artists.

1. See the biographical outline in this catalogue. More complete outlines are provided in all three of the post-war monographs on Dosso: Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 57–69; Gibbons 1968, pp. 275–91; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 111–79 (with a chronology of painting in Ferrara 1497–1548 by Alessandra Paganaro).
2. “Quasi ne’ medesimi tempi che il Cielo fece dono a Ferrara, anzi al mondo, del divino Lodovico Ariosto, nacque il Dosso pittore nella medesima città.” Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 4, p. 419). A similar observation had already appeared in the 1550 edition.
3. Franceschini 1995.
4. Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 80–81).
5. Giovannini 1992, p. 58.
6. Golzio 1936, pp. 62–63. For the background to this commission, see C. M. Brown 1997, pp. 151–58.
7. Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 3, p. 417).
8. Franceschini 1995.
9. Humfrey and Lucco 1998, pp. 26–27.
10. Campori 1863, p. 29. According to the Ferrarese agent in Rome, Paolucci, Raphael was planning to ask Dosso to apologize to Duke Alfonso on his behalf for failing to contribute to the pictorial decoration of the duke’s Camerino.
11. See, for the Vatican fresco, Campori 1863, pp. 11–12, and Golzio 1936, pp. 62–63; for *Saint Michael*, Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 122, 134.
12. Buscaroli 1935, pp. 55–58.
13. See the documents in Giovannini 1988, pp. 207–9, 222–23; and in Giovannini 1992, p. 57. When, nine years later, Dosso undertook the commission for the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece, likewise for Modena Cathedral (fig. 9), he sent Battista to Modena to sign the contract on his behalf. See Cremonini 1997.
14. Smyth 1998.
15. Recent detailed discussions of Dosso’s work at Trent include: De Gramatica in Trent 1985–86; Frangenberg 1993a; Frangenberg 1993b; Chini in Trent 1995.
16. “Finalmente divenuto Dosso già vecchio, consumò gl’ultimi anni senza lavorare, essendo insino all’ultimo della vita provisionato dal duca Alfonso.” Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 4, p. 422).
17. L. N. Cittadella 1870.
18. The recent monograph by Ballarin (1994–95) offers by far the most convincing account to date of Dosso’s stylistic development. The chronology sketched in the present essay and argued in greater detail elsewhere in this catalogue owes much to Ballarin’s general conclusions; it differs, however, in a number of particulars, especially regarding Dosso’s early career.
19. According to the local chronicler, Lancellotti 1861–67, vol. 1, pp. 395–96. But, as documents published by Giovannini (1992) show, the work was actually executed slightly earlier, 1518–21.
20. Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., pp. 306–11); Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 80–84).
21. Volpe 1981.
22. Mezzetti 1965a, p. 18; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 36–37, 45, 64, 82. Gibbons 1968, p. 27, maintained that Dosso was not necessarily ever in Rome.
23. See especially Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 23–26.
24. Ibid., p. 230.
25. Campori 1875, p. 4; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 112.
26. It had been dated to the early 1520s, later than the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece, but Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 32–33, 41, 77–79, convincingly argues that it was earlier. But Ballarin’s own dating to about 1519 is based on two arguably false assumptions: first, that the *Saint Sebastian* was painted in 1522, whereas newly published documents show it to have been painted two or three years previously (see n. 19); and second, that the figure of Saint Michael in the altarpiece for Sant’Agostino was modeled on Raphael’s cartoon for his *Saint Michael* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), which arrived in Ferrara in November 1518 (see n. 11). Dosso’s figure, however, is much simpler in pose than Raphael’s and by no means necessarily derives from it. See also Humfrey 1998a, p. 14.
27. Hitherto always dated to the 1520s or later, this picture was convincingly brought forward to the late teens in Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 38, 70–71.
28. The Michelangelism of the work is correctly emphasized by Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 49, 77–79. The author’s suggestion (pp. 45, 82) that this was inspired by a second trip to Rome in the first half of 1520 is unlikely, however, since work on the altarpiece was well advanced by this time. See the documents in Giovannini 1988, pp. 222–23.
29. The importance of Giulio Romano for Dosso at this stage of his career is rightly stressed by Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 101–7. The Della Sale altarpiece is usually thought to date from 1527 on the basis of an inscription that had been placed above the altar. But if the date of March 1527 specified in the inscription refers to the installation of the altarpiece, the painting is likely to have been substantially executed in the previous year. See also Humfrey 1998a, p. 16.
30. Humfrey 1998b.
31. See, for example, three documents published in Mezzetti 1977, pp. 51–52, and also quoted in Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 101, 105, 130.
32. Lucco 1998.
33. A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 223; Mezzetti 1977, p. 68; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 380.
34. The Portomaggiore altarpiece is convincingly attributed to Battista and dated about 1534–36 in Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 360–61.
35. “In the presence of the son of Master Dosso.” Giovannini 1988, p. 223.
36. Convincingly attributed to Battista by Ballarin 1994–95, p. 317, but dated by him to about 1516–17, some five years earlier than the date suggested here.
37. But see the perceptive discussion by Tumidei (1996).
38. “Master . . . brother of Master Dosso.” Lancellotti 1861–67, vol. 5, p. 195; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 298.
39. Humfrey 1998b.
40. The external evidence for the dating is summarized by Stefano Tumidei in *Pinacoteca di Brescia* 1991, pp. 77–79.
41. Posner 1971, pp. 11–12.
42. Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 88–89).



Fantasy, Wit, Delight: The Art of Dosso Dossi

MAURO LUCCO

At noon on Saturday, April 1, 1606, three travelers stood in the cathedral of Faenza, where they had gone to ask God for the safe continuation of their journey. A painting in the church, the first one visible on the right upon entering, attracted their attention. One of the men, a well-known painter from Rome named Pomarancio, said after looking at the work that although he did not know its painter, he thought it very beautiful. After studying it further in silence, another of the three said, “It seems to me from the way it is painted that it must be by Dosso.” Mortified, the painter examined the picture again and with some difficulty found an inscription; it contained Dosso’s signature. To the third visitor, who later recorded the event, “It seemed he ascertained the artist without difficulty, although Pomarancio himself did not.”¹ If the story is true, it describes a moment of connoisseurship rather extraordinary for its time.

This interesting episode occurred early in a journey that took Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani, one of the first admirers of Caravaggio and a noted collector, on his own “grand tour” across Europe. The person who later recounted it with wit and gusto (“something happened that I had to write down”) was the marchese’s secretary, Bernardo Bizoni. Among other things, the anecdote succinctly conveys the effects of the massive dispersal of paintings from Ferrara after it passed into the rule of the papacy in 1598. The thorough sacking of that Emilian city, which was still going on in 1606, had brought a great number of works by Dosso Dossi to the Roman art market; this explains how the painting in the cathedral could be recognized by an enlightened aesthete like Giustiniani—who, incidentally, owned a paint-

ing by Dosso, the *Virgin and Child with Saints Joseph and Francis* now in Berlin (cat. no.5), although he thought it was by Sebastiano del Piombo—and not by a painter, despite what might be called his professional responsibility to know such things.

The episode has, however, a curious aspect. Giustiniani was too intelligent and cultured a man not to know Vasari’s *Lives of the Artists*. In both the 1550 and 1568 editions of that work, the Faenza panel is among the few Dosso paintings to be described favorably, as “a most beautiful panel” in the earlier version and then, slightly downgraded, as “a very lovely panel” in the later volume. Was Giustiniani merely feigning his spur-of-the-moment connoisseurship? We will never know whether the story demonstrates a real capacity to use the eye to distinguish styles or simply a good memory.

In any case, it is clear that for some mysterious reason, Vasari did not like Dosso and Battista Dossi. The unfriendly disposition expressed toward them in his 1550 edition had by 1568 become open malevolence, mixed with some obvious envy. Vasari did not hesitate to assert that “the pen of [Master] Lodovico [Ariosto] has given more renown to the name of Dosso than did all the brushes and colours that he used in the whole of his life. Wherefore I, for my part, declare that there could be no greater good-fortune than that of those who are celebrated by such great men, since the might of the pen forces most of mankind to accept their fame, even though they may not wholly deserve it.”³ Fame, that is, immortality and the possibility of conquering death, is thus entirely in the hands of the poet, who can bestow or withhold it at his pleasure. As Vasari saw it, the favor Dosso enjoyed at the court of Alfonso I

was in a way due more to the artist's affability and humanity than to the quality of his paintings.

Nevertheless, it is clear that a great number of people disagreed with Vasari, the painter-writer from Arezzo, preferring to credit the famous second stanza that was added to the thirty-third canto of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* for its later, 1532 edition, and that speaks of the most important modern artists:

And those, yet living or of earlier day,
Mantegna, Leonardo, Gian Belline,
The Dossi, and, skilled to carve or to pourtray,
Michael [Angelo], less man than angel and divine,
Bastiano, Raphael, Titian, who (as they
Urbino and Venice) makes Cadoro shine; . . .⁴

Coming just four years after the publication of Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier*, with its discussions of art and artists, Ariosto's list signaled a change in the canon of taste, which in painting sought more and more a technical and expressive complexity, skillful simulation, or an attitude of playful amusement. It is for this reason that Giorgione, already a mysterious figure, was omitted from the list (although he had been on Castiglione's), making room for the artists Vasari called Giorgione's "two excellent creations," Titian and Sebastiano del Piombo. It is for this reason, too, and perhaps because of local associations, that Giovanni Bellini (whose *Feast of the Gods* [fig. 18] then hung in Duke Alfonso's Camerino), Dosso, and his brother Battista were included. That the Dossi fulfilled a desire of the Este court for amusement is indicated by Paolo Giovio's assessment of about 1527, which specifically noted the "pleasantness" of their pictures.

Vasari, whose ideal was the *maniera*, or "modern manner"—who intensely admired Michelangelo, with his tormented vigils and long study, as well as Raphael and some of the Florentine artists—had too serious an idea of painting to appreciate the charm, entertainment, and free flights of fantasy that are the essential characteristics of Dosso's poetry. To his eyes they must have appeared to some degree immoral. Nor was Vasari's preconceived hostility toward the two artists from Ferrara an isolated case. The Venetian writer Lodovico Dolce

(1557) put his disparaging words in the mouth of Pietro Aretino, another Tuscan writer and a proponent of the *maniera* style in Venice, having him say that Ariosto was always a man of great intelligence, except when he committed the huge mistake of putting the Dossi on the same level as Michelangelo. Their clumsy manner, Dolce wrote, was "unworthy . . . of the pen of such a poet."⁵

While Dosso was still alive, however, and in the period shortly after his death, his work fared better. Sebastiano Serlio (1537) offered lively praise for the now-lost fresco grisailles on the facade of the Palazzo del Corte in Ferrara, and Francisco de Hollanda (1548, but based on his meeting with Michelangelo in 1538) had the great artist call Dosso's paintings in the castle at Ferrara among the most beautiful works of art he had seen in Italy. In a long poem celebrating the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trent, Andrea Mattioli (1539) praised Dosso's frescoes there and even claimed him for that land, identifying him as a "Trentino."

After the negative evaluations of Dosso's work by Vasari and Dolce, a more positive response quickly found expression again. In handwritten notes in a copy of the 1568 edition of Vasari's *Lives*, now preserved in the Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio in Bologna, Annibale Carracci tersely wrote that the beauty of Dosso's work was obvious, and that in comparison Vasari's was dry, crude, and worthy only of the bonfire. At more or less the same time, the artist and theorist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo (1584) chose admiring words to describe the fleeting effects of light in Dosso's landscapes, the "evanescent woods lit from within by the rays of the sun."⁶ In 1657 the art historian Francesco Scannelli, who clearly shared this viewpoint, explained Vasari's dislike of Dosso's work as an irrational aversion to all artists who were not Tuscan, had not studied Michelangelo, or had not made drawings that subsequently made their way into Vasari's own collection.

However, from the seventeenth to almost the end of the nineteenth century, few attempts were made to interpret Dosso's style within the general parameters of workshop practice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the products

of which were almost always altarpieces or decorative frescoes. Instead, local studies of the artist—undertaken without access to his paintings, which by then were mostly in Rome and, to a lesser extent, in Modena—focused on biographical data, which were gathered either through archival research or by reexamining local traditions. The most complete research effort, based on a study of Este documents, was undertaken at the end of the nineteenth century by Adolfo Venturi (1892–93) and led Giovanni Morelli (1890) to reattribute to Dosso several works on canvas that had been credited to other artists; this work was then taken up again by Bernard Berenson (1907). These efforts formed the basis for Henrietta Mendelsohn's monograph (1914) on Dosso, the first serious modern study of the artist, which gathered together and evaluated all the material thus far published, offering a reliable corpus and an almost as reliable ordering of it. Mendelsohn followed Morelli's suggestion that Dosso's formation was Venetian, but it was Roberto Longhi (1927a, 1934) who reestablished the artist's place as the very best Ferrarese painter of the sixteenth century and one of the greatest of the entire region. Indeed, Dosso was placed at a cultural turning point, becoming a key figure in the creative rejection of the classical Roman experience. His stance was shared, in the second decade of the century, by a group of artists active in the Po valley, such as Callisto Piazza of Lodi in neighboring Lombardy, whose work Longhi initially confused with Dosso's. Longhi's critical construction of this formative decade in Dosso's career long remained one of the most disputed issues in Dosso studies. Perfectly in tune with a Ferrarese reality but part of a broader cultural world, including Mantua and Cremona as well as Brescia, Dosso, in Longhi's reading, gave the Po valley painters their freedom from the cage of classicism through the strength of his radiant and abstract color fantasies. Then in his last years he pointed artists toward a rediscovery of natural truth, with works that seem to foreshadow pictorial experiments like those of Vincenzo and Antonio Campi and eventually of Caravaggio.

A series of modern monographs by Amalia

Mezzetti (1965a), Felton Gibbons (1968), and Alessandro Ballarin (1994–95) can be placed within this intellectual framework, although they reach some tangibly different conclusions. Of these, Ballarin's contains the most profound exploration of Dosso's relationships with Giorgione and Titian, the latter of whom Dosso was in contact with all of his life. It also offers the clearest vision of the late part of the artist's career, which was heavily influenced by Giulio Romano's presence in Mantua from 1524 on. A single discovery, however, was to undermine this entire critical system. It, too, came in 1995, when Adriano Franceschini found a document that dates a key work, the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6), to 1513–14. This monumental altarpiece had previously been dated to the 1520s or later on the basis of style and evidence relating to the donor.⁷ As a result of the new, significantly earlier dating (not, however, universally accepted), the group of paintings Longhi had reconstructed as the artist's early production (see cat. nos. 55–58) lost any logical coherence, and these works must now be attributed to other hands.

With the polyptych dated to 1513–14, the Giorgionesque qualities of the Saint George on its right side can be understood within the work's proper intellectual context. Like Giorgione but unlike the majority of painters in early-sixteenth-century Italy, Dosso—in this painting and then throughout his career—did not work from plans for his images sketched on paper; instead he developed his compositions directly on the panel or canvas, trying different alternatives, rejecting or changing them in paint, and trusting to the inspiration of the moment or to what emerged as the most felicitous solution. This practice was so deep-rooted for the artist that it has become one of the yardsticks by which to judge the authenticity of a work, as the technical investigations using x-radiography and reflectography undertaken for this exhibition have demonstrated. Almost every time the style of a painting openly proclaims that it belongs in Dosso's oeuvre, changes, sometimes decisive ones, have been discovered in the underlayers of the work; conversely, when stylistic analysis gives rise

to some doubt about a work's authorship by Dosso, it is rarely found to contain pentimenti. There are still no drawings securely or unanimously attributed to Dosso (although, interestingly, this is not the case with Battista). Dosso's working method clearly shows the Venetian influence on his artistic formation.

So free and easy an approach to representation makes iconographical analysis, a common critical practice, difficult to apply to Dosso's works. Because the artist allowed himself to make significant changes as a picture progressed, based on ideas of the moment and aimed only at enabling the picture to function better visually, his paintings almost never illustrate a clearly identifiable literary source. Dosso's method of representing textual sources ties him even more closely to an essentially Venetian working method and leads to a free, syncretic re-fusing of literary elements, with highly evocative results. There is no doubt that Dosso's work was part of the "culture of pleasure" at the Este court, and his representations, with their hermeticism and happy, gentle mythology that lacks moral undertones, belong to the very new Venetian genre of painting "poesie," which at the time was very popular. Wrote Paolo Pino (1548), "Painting is really poetry, that is, invention, which makes what does not exist visible."⁸ He encouraged painters to do as writers did and practice "brevity," to refrain from concentrating the whole world in one image, and simultaneously not to be too meticulous in the execution of that image.

Dosso conformed perfectly to this ideal. He was never an illustrator so much as an improviser, who, beginning on the canvas, broadened or collapsed the narrative sequence of the story, selected the facts he wanted, expanded on one event to the detriment of another, embroidered tangential elements and ignored major themes. He had at his disposition different flavors and colors, which he distributed freely and with a mastery that seemed rather like magic or witchcraft. Even when his point of departure was a precise literary text (and this was rare in Dosso's art), as, for example, with the *Aeneid* frieze in Alfonso d'Este's Camerino (cat. no. 24), he

retained complete freedom to stage the work as he wanted, depending on only a few key elements to make the story recognizable. The same is true for the *Circe and Her Lovers*, now in Washington (cat. no. 3), which without the presence of the animals might be taken for a depiction of Venus. In the so-called *Melissa* in the Galleria Borghese (cat. no. 12), once also regarded as a picture of Circe, the extreme difficulty of securely identifying the subject is intensified by the surprising results of recent x-rays. As is discussed by Anna Coliva in her essay (see pp. 75–76), although the sorceress now seems to gaze into open space, in an earlier stage of the painting she was looking at the standing figure of a man in armor. The first and second versions are almost like two movie frames: from one to the next, with a glance, the warrior vanishes, as if incinerated or magically transformed, leaving only his glistening cuirass behind. The constant, restless glimmer of reflected light that runs throughout the picture preserves a trace of the sorceress's wizardry. One sees it especially in the cascade of fringe (detail, p. 116), the metallic luster of the armor, the shimmering heavy damask, the flames that illuminate a small part of the ground, the foliage that, almost singed by the lamplight, stands out from the dark mass of trees in the foreground, the tufts of grass exploding like small fireworks. The uninterrupted, ceaseless invention of figural forms, the evident joy in narrating, imagining, rambling, the clear spirit of a novel of adventure, all make *Melissa* the closest visual parallel to the literary course Ariosto followed in his *Orlando Furioso*. (Given that affinity, it is curious that the *Melissa*, if indeed that is her identity, and Battista Dossi's *Battle of Orlando and Rodomonte* [cat. no. 50]) are the only true subjects from Ariosto in all the works of the Dossi brothers.)

This joyous mood, this pervasive atmosphere of poetic and narrative fable, represents the expressive register that Dosso felt most intensely. He shrank from depicting dramas, preferring single figures to groups or at least a treatment in which each figure of an episode is studied separately, without any real relationship to the others. Even in one of the most tragic moments illustrated in Dosso's oeuvre, when

Apollo mourns the loss of Daphne (cat. no. 28), the pain expressed, which could have been quite wrenching, is muted by the lyric, almost affirmative image evoking the cathartic power of music and the silence that follows its interruption. In the *Lamentation* in London (cat. no. 16), the three women pour out their emotion in gestures of agony; at the same time, it seems as if each one undergoes a separate suffering from a separate source, and the focus of attention for all of them is not the body of Christ in the foreground. Dosso seems incapable of coordinating all the figures for a single expressive purpose; and it is precisely the isolation of the individual actors that links the *Lamentation* to the Northern European representational tradition, with its “anticlassical” stamp.

The artist behaved in the same free way with his representational sources. He sometimes borrowed details from prints, as was customary, and inserted them in different contexts; David Alan Brown (1981) rightly noted that the dog on the left in *Melissa* seems to have been inspired by Dürer’s engraving *Saint Eustace* (fig. 69). Dosso probably also used elements from his own intellectual or visual experience, imaginatively transforming them. The three warriors on the right in *Melissa*, with their broad feathered hats, certainly correspond in some way to the real lansquenets who saw action in the Lombard Wars in the second decade of the century. In his series *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* (cat. no. 22), Dosso intentionally borrowed from Michelangelo’s figures of nude youths on the Sistine ceiling, the famous *Ignudi*, which he could have seen just after they were completed, when, as is almost certainly the case, he visited Rome in 1513. Classical sculpture, on the other hand, seems to have had almost no impact on Dosso, even though he could have seen it during the same stay in Rome.

Seemingly, a natural inclination toward the isolated human figure would have made Dosso’s art particularly well suited for allegory. But this was not the case. Allegory requires both a scrupulous attention to significant details and their coherent arrangement, and Dosso had no desire to produce so set and crystallized an image. Some of the few pictures he painted that

might be labeled allegories are unrecognizable, either because of the transformations they have undergone—the so-called *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38) is one such—or because he had no interest in putting sufficiently precise clues in them, as with the Borghese picture (cat. no. 39). Other allegories are almost disarmingly simple: they include the *Allegory of Music* in the Horne Foundation (cat. no. 25) and the *Allegory of Fortune* at the Getty Museum (cat. no. 41). The Uffizi *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42) belongs in a different category.

Having begun, metaphorically, with the open laughter of the *Buffoon* (cat. no. 2), Dosso’s career ended with the apparently ferocious joke of the *Allegory of Hercules*, which responds to Duke Ercole d’Este’s interest in comic poetry and aspects of the ridiculous. Between the two runs a long streak of ironic amusement, the artist’s impulse to laugh and joke, which, as we have noted, cut across all his work. He never missed an opportunity to present signs of humor or wit. This summarizes an interpretation of Dosso’s work that was first put forward by Paul Barolsky (1978) and that seems to the present author most promising; but, surprisingly, it has yet to be generally accepted, while attempts at unnaturally serious interpretations, searching for contorted alchemical symbolism, still periodically come to the fore. They would have made Dosso smile. He deliberately used comic details or a surprising and unexpected humor to lessen the intensity and bring his narrative back to a lighter, more fanciful tone. We see an example of this in his marvelous symbolic signature—a limp letter D crossed by a bone (*osso*, in Italian)—in the foreground of *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 20), preventing the mystic agitation suggested by the saint’s pose from being taken too seriously. The same purpose is served by the lion, who returns to his lair with the slow, indolent gait of an old dog. Dosso plays this game again and again: with the pestilential breath ushering forth like a column of smoke from the mouth of the vanquished devil in the altarpiece painted for the church of Sant’Agostino in Modena (fig. 6); with Lucifer’s webbed duck-feet and tail lit like a fuse in the altarpiece depicting the victory of the

Archangel Michael, in the Pinacoteca in Parma (fig. 26); with *Hercules* in the painting in Graz (cat. no. 40), based on a story by Philostratus but anticipating Jonathan Swift by a couple of centuries, where the hero, with a single, exaggerated gesture, sweeps up in his lion skin the several thousand pygmies who are attacking him with ladders and tiny weapons. Do these examples not embody the free flight of an imagination naturally inclined toward playfulness, wit, high spirits? And that is even more the case when the humor is used to illustrate an already amusing text. Thus, Dosso was able to offer an extraordinary moral, a vindication of the right of invention over all else, in his *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* in Vienna (cat. no. 27), which was based on a pseudo-Lucian dialogue actually written by Leon Battista Alberti (Whitfield 1966). Virtue, scorned by Fortune and by humankind, is not allowed to complain of it to Jupiter, the father of the gods; Mercury stops her and orders her to be silent because “the master is composing.” Using all the colors of the rainbow, Jupiter is creating the infinitely ephemeral, gratuitous beauty of the butterflies’ wings.

It is no surprise that the serious (and resentful) Vasari, faced with a brilliant, witty, comic invention like the Sala delle Cariatidi in the Villa Imperiale at Pesaro (fig. 31), painted in 1530, invented a tale at Dosso’s expense: that after the room was frescoed by that artist the fresco was immediately demolished because it was so badly done. In fact, on entering this room one is immersed in a deep and uninterrupted landscape, without any architectural divisions, which illusionistically covers the walls and ceiling. The painter plays with voids and solids, with narrative (in the fictive tapestry on the ceiling) and nature, with reality and illusion, even jokingly incorporating the inevitably protruding windows, and the landscape one sees from them, into the logic of the pictorial representation. The Sala delle Cariatidi is absolutely the first room in the history of Italian painting with this kind of unified and uninterrupted representation. It precedes by some years Giulio Romano’s surprising and terrifying invention in the Sala dei Giganti of the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, and by hundreds of years the “land-

scape rooms,” with their sylvan fables, that became popular in Emilian villas in the eighteenth century.

Dosso was indeed an extraordinary landscape painter. Even Vasari was forced to admit this, writing already in the 1550 edition of his *Lives*, “Dosso had the reputation in Lombardy [that is, Northern Italy] of executing landscapes better than any other painter engaged in that branch of the profession, whether in mural painting, in oils, or in gouache [*guazzo*]; and all the more after the German manner became known.”⁹ The comparison between Dosso’s landscapes and the rough, apparently wild views of the Flemish painters is noteworthy. As the critic Paolo Pino wrote (1548), simply imitating nature does not make lovely landscapes, and he had admired in the paintings of his master, Savoldo, “several dawns with reflections of the sun, certain darknesses with a thousand ingenious and rare descriptions, whose image of reality was even truer than that of the Flemish painters.”¹⁰

Pictures of country houses and porticos and landscape gardens, groves, woods, hills, fish-ponds, canals, rivers, coasts, and whatever anybody could desire, together with various sketches of people going for a stroll or sailing in a boat or on land going to country houses riding on asses or in carriages, and also people fishing and fowling or hunting or even gathering the vintage. His works include splendid villas approached by roads across marshes, men tottering and staggering along carrying women on their shoulders for a bargain, and a number of humorous drawings of that sort besides, extremely wittily designed.

This, according to Pliny,¹¹ was the repertoire of the Roman painter Ludius (or Studius), and it is a list of images one finds reproduced almost literally in many of Dosso’s works. We know that the desire to revive the style, the artistic methods, and the subject matter of antiquity was strong in the intellectual circles at court, and, whether or not he was encouraged, Dosso certainly tried to re-create that type of landscape painting. Canvases like *Travelers in a Wood* (cat. no. 11) or *The Three Ages of Man* (cat. no. 10) seem exact translations of some of Ludius’s ideas, since they have, at least to our eyes, no clearly definable subject. On the other hand,

there are the coolness of the woods, the soft, feathery quality of the trees, the inversion of light and transfiguring color, the diaphanous city seen in the distance in the flickering air, the great bays or rivers flowing through the artist's works, all delightful diversions from the principal subject that do not imply any particular or serious meaning. Paolo Giovio understood this perfectly when he defined Dosso's landscape backgrounds as *parerga*, that is, ornamental accessories, in a 1527 passage describing the painter's devotion to "the pleasant diversions of painting" (quoted below, p. 45). He placed even more emphasis than Pliny had on an enjoyment of those details that provide delight, agreeable distraction, a sense of festivity, and visual pleasure. These *parerga* take on an ever more important role in Dosso's paintings and in fact sometimes become the primary element, as in the *Landscape with Saints* (cat. no. 34) or the Sala delle Cariatidi at Pesaro, and come to signify a magnification of delight. It is worth noting, however, that, contrary to Giovio's assertion, this pleasure resides not so much in what is represented but in its antinaturalistic treatment, in the aspect of surprise that comes from unexpected illumination, an agreement between or sharp contrast of colors, or strange natural phenomena. Like fireworks, lunar orbs and rainbows explode into Dosso's paintings, light is filtered through great masses of clouds over plains, mists knead the skies with pink and gray, with red, with a soft, fluttering yellow, as if to create an open dissociation between the forms of things and their colors, their reality existing only in the first. The spectacular color acts rather to transfigure the material, to put it in that dreamlike world where everything is witty diversion and a pleasant entreaty of the senses.

Inevitably, a world constructed of such fantasy cannot recognize single individuals, only broad human categories, and even the strongest feelings must be expressed not as unique instances but as types. There may be crying, laughter, or fear, but there is no way for a particular person to experience one or another of them. There are facial types, some even repeated several times, like the broad, plump faces that identify Saint Cosmas or Damian (cat.

no. 23) and the personification of Drunkenness (cat. no. 26c); but not individual faces. That is why Dosso never showed any real talent as a portrait painter, and of the few existing portraits that have been attributed to him, no more than one or two have withstood the scrutiny of modern criticism. That he inclined little toward that genre is also evident in his particular representational approach; as inventive and innovative as Dosso was in his paintings based on ancient and modern poetry, allegories, and narratives, his portraits do not ever appear to have forced the limits established years earlier by Giorgione. There is, for example, nothing in his oeuvre to compare with the very sensitive portraits of individual personalities by his contemporary Lorenzo Lotto.

Almost identical considerations come into play in a discussion of the altarpieces Dosso was often asked to paint, sometimes by the duke himself. Although the Costabili polyptych, executed in collaboration with Garofalo in a somewhat outmoded multipaneled format, is a case apart in Dosso's career, even the other altarpieces Dosso made do not represent the most innovative experiments in that genre. If anything, they are united by the artist's refusal to adopt the fifteenth-century compositional formula in which groups of holy figures are placed within the ennobling ambiance of ecclesiastical architecture. Dosso always preferred to put his saints in a landscape instead. The only exception to this rule is the Faenza altarpiece, which is now lost but is known through a copy made by Vincenzo Biancoli in 1752 and still in the cathedral at Faenza. The composition's setting within a great basilica, unusual for Dosso, may account for Vasari's approval of the picture. In general, Dosso's altarpieces rarely show intense spirituality or a profound interest in the articles of faith. On the contrary, it is not unusual to find some pleasing detail inserted that conveys a sense of fantasy and avoids too precise a religious import. As noted above, the webbed feet and fuselike tail of Lucifer in the *Saint Michael* altarpiece (fig. 26) exemplify this sort of artifice. Dosso certainly had knowledge of the altarpieces in Rome that were most modern in 1513, when in all likelihood he saw Raphael's

Madonna of Foligno (fig. 4). From that time on, his favorite compositional scheme had the divine group on clouds, before an orb of light. This is true in the Sant'Agostino altarpiece (fig. 6), the work in which he comes closest to the Raphaelesque formula, as well as in his next altarpiece, in the cathedral in Modena (fig. 1); in the two altarpieces commissioned by Alfonso for Modena and Reggio; and in the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece (fig. 9) and a smaller version of the same subject, both of which were destroyed in Dresden. The only partial exception is the Della Sale altarpiece (fig. 76), in which the two saints still turn their gazes upward, toward a dramatically overcast sky.

The sensual richness of warm color, the magnificence of the costumes, the luxuriant dream landscapes with their abstract and unreal lighting—like the aurora borealis—all contribute to the dimension of magical diversion present in Dosso's altarpieces, to which other artistic elements are subordinated. Indeed, he did not hesitate in the altarpieces, as he did in other kinds of paintings, to distort the foreshortening, deform the anatomies, disregard proportions, stretch out his space and perspective views, and skew the design in order to produce a finished work that would offer the maximum visual delight. It is to this joyously fantastic, pleasing, stimulating style that Dosso dedicated his greatest efforts. Wrote Longhi, “With this imaginative entertainer, the flourishing world of Venetian color loses all its peacefulness as it sends off sparks of every hue, and the most extraordinary tales unwind in surprising landscapes where the jungle of colored raffia trees reaches to the edges of the cities and where fine groups of soldiers, glittering like ephemeral butterflies, touch down for an instant in the clearings, in front of the ‘evanescent woods.’”¹²

Dosso died in 1542 without any real artistic heirs. His brother Battista had from the beginning tried to differentiate his style from Dosso's, despite the numerous collaborations they undertook. That is perhaps why Vasari wrote in 1550 that the brothers “were always enemies, even when they worked together.” And Dosso's

peculiar style was too personal and elusive, too closely connected to his virtuoso ability, to be absorbed and replicated by others. From the many-sided complex of his expressive elements, only occasionally does something—a ragged quality of the brushstroke, the sheen of certain colors, a few passages of fantastic weather phenomena—show up in the work of an artist painting someplace where Dosso's work could be seen, especially in Mantua or Cremona and more indirectly in Brescia, Lodi, or Parma.

Dosso's significance in the history of North Italian painting must not be underestimated. After first building on Giorgione's legacy, in the second decade of the sixteenth century, partly due to Titian's influence, he rejected and then recast this artistic heritage in surprisingly vivid color—to some extent opposing the triumph of classical taste. At the end of the same decade the muscularity of Michelangelo's art became very important to Dosso, as did the visionary emotion of Northern painting. Early in the 1520s his compositions settled down, his figures grew larger and more robust, and the tension of a more modern style, filtered through the work of Giulio Romano, can be seen in Dosso's more complex figural poses and lucid consolidation of forms. Continuing into the 1530s, this development led to the progressive rarefaction of figures and to a certain archaism in composition, with forms arranged parallel to the picture plane. At the same time there was a heightened pursuit of truthfulness in the appearance of things—exemplified by the still life in the *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42)—that was a bridge to the future, looking, by way of the work of Vincenzo Campi, toward the Lombard “painters of reality” of the following centuries.

Dosso, with his smiling eye and festive hand, thus lived through very intense periods in the artistic culture of Italy, contributing something to each. But above all else, his gift to future generations was his capacity to entertain, to capture the viewer's attention and emotions, to stimulate the most vivid fantasies—qualities that make his art one of the most fascinating and intriguing ever to emerge from Northern Italy.

1. “A me pare che sia di mano del Dossi alla maniera con la quale è dipinto”; “parve di non aver fatto poco in acertare l'autore, che dall'istesso Pomaranci non si diceva.” Bizoni 1995, pp. 28–29.
2. “Successe una cosa che non voglio mancar di scrivere.” Ibid.
3. “Al nome di Dosso ha dato maggior fama la penna di messer Ludovico [Ariosto], che non fecero tutti i pennelli e colori che consumò in tutta sua vita. Onde io per me confesso, che grandissima ventura è quella di colore che sono da così grandi uomini celebrati; perché il valore della penna sforza infiniti a dar credenza alle lodi di quelli, ancor che interamente non le meritino.” Vasari 1568 (English translation from 1996 ed., vol. 1, p. 868).
4. “E quei che furo ai nostri di, o sono ora, / Leonardo, Andrea Mantegna, Gian Bellino, / duo Dossi, e quel ch'a par sculpe e colora, / Michel, più che mortal, Angel divino; / Bastiano, Rafael, Tizian, ch'onora / non men Cador che quei Venezia e Urbino; . . .” English translation in Ariosto 1968, p. 347.
5. “Indegni . . . della penna d'un tanto poeta.” Dolce was the first to suggest that Dosso studied in Venice with Titian and that Battista was trained by Raphael in Rome. The former statement reveals the writer's actual ignorance of the facts of Dosso's life, especially since it was Dolce who first recognized that Titian was born about 1490—which made the two artists essentially contemporaries. In the 1568 edition of the *Lives*, Vasari suggested that Dosso studied with Lorenzo Costa.
6. “Sfuggimento dei boschi coi raggi del sole che per entro lampeggiano.” English translation from Gibbons 1968, p. 86, n. 3.
7. Mezzetti (1965a) and Gibbons (1968) dated it to 1530, Pattanaro (1989–90) to about 1526–27, and Ballarin (1994–95) to about 1523.
8. “Pittura è propria poesia, cioè invenzione, la qual fà apparere quel che non è.”
9. “Ebbe in Lombardia titolo da tutti i pittori de fare i paesi meglio che alcuno altro che di quella pratica operasse, o in muro o in olio o a guazzo, massimamente da poi che la maniera tedesca s'è veduta.” Vasari 1568 (English translation from 1996 ed., vol. 1, p. 868).
10. “Alcune aurore con rifletti del sole, certe oscurità con mille descritioni ingeniosissime e rare, le qual cose hanno più vera imagine del proprio che li Fiamenghi.”
11. Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV:37; English translation from Pliny 1968, p. 347.
12. Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 85).



Dosso's Public: The Este Court at Ferrara

ANDREA BAYER

ALFONSO I AND HIS COURT

Alfonso d'Este (1476–1534), the third duke of Ferrara (fig. 16), ruled the city and its territory from 1505 to 1534, during one of the most tumultuous periods in its history. Beset by worries over the integrity of his state and forced to devote much of his attention to military matters, Alfonso was nonetheless one of the great art patrons of his day. In this he followed the proud tradition of his forebears: from Leonello d'Este, patron of Jacopo Bellini, Andrea Mantegna, and Rogier van der Weyden in the mid-fifteenth century, through Borso, who commissioned the great fresco cycle of the months in the Palazzo Schifanoia, to his own father, Ercole I, whose projects included the planning of the entire northern half of the city, known as the Herculean Addition. Indeed, the patronage of the Este court helped shape the course of humanist painting and princely building in the Renaissance. In broad outline Alfonso's own commissions ran along the same lines as those of his predecessors, but they are marked by his personality and his distinctive preferences. Dosso Dossi was the duke's court artist from 1514 and lived in the castle at Ferrara; thus, the story of either one cannot be told without telling that of the other. Indeed, the contemporaneous biographer Giorgio Vasari informs us that "Dosso was much loved by Alfonso . . . first for the qualities that he brought to the art of painting, and then because he was an affable and pleasant man, and such men gave pleasure to the duke."¹

Alfonso's reputation as a ruler and cultural figure has been mixed. At the turn of this century, Edmund Gardner wrote that he "inherited but little of his father's popularity, and had none of his wife's culture [referring to Lucrezia

Borgia, his second wife]. Brusque in manners, negligent in attire and somewhat forbidding in appearance, he left Lucrezia to her own circle of poets and humanists, while he devoted himself to his favourite mechanical pursuits, casting guns, working in metal, manufacturing majolica vessels and the like."² Childish pranks suggest a wild streak in his character: in 1494 he and the painter Ercole de' Roberti angered Alfonso's father by some unacceptable nighttime behavior, while in 1497 rumors of his wandering nude through the city streets traveled as far as Venice. On that occasion Marin Sanudo noted that the Ferrarese found him "pocho savio," hardly wise.³ In a letter written in 1501, when Alfonso



Fig. 16. Copy after Titian, *Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara*. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Munsey Fund, 1928 (27.56)



Fig. 17. View of the castle complex in Ferrara, including the Via Coperta with its sixteenth-century balcony, the ravelin, and one of the towers

was twenty-five, his sister Isabella d'Este, the marchesa of Mantua, was still lamenting his crude behavior.⁴ Many people thought that he spent too much time with artisans, whom he invited to share his table. He was characterized as coarse and cantankerous; it was said that he had to abandon his studies in order to prepare himself for a military career, and that this deficiency rankled. Sometimes it seems that he received unstinting praise only for the regularity of his payments to those in his employ, including his soldiers.⁵

It is the very unexpected mixture of his pursuits that makes Alfonso such an intriguing and appealing character, and this extends to his choice of companions. The humanist Paolo Giovio, a contemporary biographer of the duke, wrote rather admiringly that he sought out the company of “the most excellent craftsmen of various arts” at the expense of *huomini grandi*, important men. But Giovio was quick to point

out that Alfonso took offense at being considered unlettered and militaristic and that he loved many cultured men, among them the well-traveled humanist Celio Calcagnini, the erudite medical doctor Nicolò Leoncino, and his secretary Bonaventura Pistofilo, who amassed an important collection of medals and books.⁶ The duke valued humanist education; determined that his heir, Ercole II, receive a brilliant preparation, he gloried in the youth’s ability to impress the papal court as an orator at the age of fourteen.

Alfonso’s delight in fine objects also had two sides. On the one hand, all his contemporary biographers make clear that the duke himself crafted a whole variety of objects and studied the processes of manufacturing others. As early as 1493, when he was seventeen, Alfonso asked an agent in Venice to buy him pigments for painting.⁷ He later had a private room fitted out as a workshop, to which he retired for pleasure when his duties permitted. There, according to Giovio, he fashioned “wooden flutes, tables, and chess pieces, beautiful and ingenious boxes, and many other similar objects.” Another biographer, Agostino Mosti, specifically mentioned his making of musical instruments. Giovio noted that “he also sometimes made the most beautiful ceramic vessels, which could be used as household utensils,” and that these efforts were very useful to him.⁸ We know, for example, that during a wartime financial crisis the duke’s own ceramics were used at table because the gold and silver plate was being melted down.

Alfonso was best known for the interest he took in artillery and casting bronze, and here another excerpt from Giovio’s biography conveys his intensity: “He also applied himself to the founding of metals, much as a smith; and he was so successful at these arts that he went beyond and surpassed all the best craftsmen with his inventiveness in the mixing of metals at high temperatures and in casting unusually huge pieces of artillery.”⁹ An anecdote describes a notorious instance of the duke’s founding activity. During the tortuous political maneuvers of the War of the League of Cambrai (1509–16), Alfonso, who had been an ally of Pope Julius II, became his sworn enemy, and Ferrara was

threatened by papal troops. When the neighboring city of Bologna was liberated from papal rule and Michelangelo's great bronze statue of the pope was removed from the city's central square, Alfonso somehow obtained it, melted it down (conserving the head), and from the metal made a cannon known tongue-in-cheek as "La Giulia."¹⁰ (Is this the cannon on which the duke's hand rests in a copy of his portrait by Titian, fig. 16?)

The renown of Alfonso's practical pursuits—turning wood, casting bronzes, making and painting pottery—sometimes masks his equally strong contemplative side and his predilection for collecting. Quite early on, Alfonso became a patron of the arts. In 1494 Isabella d'Este was told that he had set Ercole de' Roberti to work on a painting project and was "constantly hovering over him."¹¹ Alfonso traveled rather extensively as a young man, to Rome in 1492 with Ercole de' Roberti and to the Netherlands, France, and England in 1504. There is little record of what he admired on these trips, but Giovio implies that he was particularly struck by tapestries he saw north of the Alps.

Alfonso's interests in the arts intensified soon after he became duke in 1505. In 1507 he commissioned Antonio Lombardo (ca. 1458–1516), the great Venetian sculptor who had recently come to the Ferrarese court, to return to Venice and there assemble a team of stonemasons who could work in the castle complex that was the duke's principal residence. The complex, generally referred to as the Castello, included the castle itself, the palace (Palazzo del Corte), and a building connecting them, the Via Coperta. As is discussed below, the team was soon engaged in carving a large series of marble reliefs in classical style. Many of the reliefs consisted of decorative motifs, but some had complicated mythological narratives. One of the reliefs is dated and inscribed, in Latin: "In 1508 Alfonso, the third duke of Ferrara, established this for his leisure and tranquillity." Two others have related inscriptions: a quotation from Cicero's *De Officiis* (III:1) observing that a ruler is never less idle than when idle, never less alone than when alone; and another from an epistle by Seneca to the effect that he who is indolent should work,

while he who works should rest. Thus, in his first major commission, Alfonso demonstrated an attachment to the art and literature of the classical past and a willingness to embark on a scheme with a complex meaning.¹² Employing literary formulas of ancient lineage, he expressed his own thoughts about the importance of a ruler's *otium*, or leisure, and the integral role of contemplation in the ruler's lifestyle.

Alfonso's passion for collecting both paintings and antiquities gained momentum in the 1510s. When he visited Rome on the election of Pope Leo X in 1513, a rather optimistic and relaxed moment, Alfonso dedicated himself to those pursuits. A humanist close to the court, Mario Equicola, reported that "at present he cares only for commissioning pictures and seeing antiquities." Upon his return to Ferrara, Alfonso's correspondence with his ambassador Beltrando Costabili shows that he continued to hunt for antiquities or for artists who could make good replicas of them.¹³ He also commissioned Raphael to look out for antiquities for him; and after the Sack of Rome in 1527, other agents (Raphael had died in 1520) were instructed to take advantage of the "ruin" around them by salvaging antiques for the duke. Alfonso was also preoccupied with the development of his numismatic collection, which he entrusted to two of his closest humanist advisers, Pistofilo and Calcagnini.¹⁴

The duke's desire to commission paintings and to emerge as a patron of the first rank is illuminated by an anecdote about his trip to Rome in 1512, when he hoped to reconcile with Julius II. Although under great stress (rumors reached him that the pope might attempt to have him killed), Alfonso nonetheless found time to visit Michelangelo at work in the Sistine Chapel and to climb onto the scaffolding with his nephew Federico II Gonzaga, who described their visit in a splendidly suggestive letter: "The Lord Duke remained up there with Michelangelo, for he could not see enough of those figures, he flattered him copiously, and in the end His Lordship requested that he should make him a painting; and he made him discuss it, he offered money, and extracted a promise to do it."¹⁵ Alfonso's gluttony for paintings reached



Fig. 18. Giovanni Bellini, *The Feast of the Gods*. Oil on canvas. © Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Widener Collection

its apogee when in 1520 he attempted to spirit away the *Saint Sebastian* panel from the great polyptych by Titian that had been commissioned by Cardinal Altobello Averoldi for the Brescian church of Saints Nazaro and Celso.¹⁶ Fortunately, this bold but underhanded move came to nothing.

Alfonso was eager to attract musicians and literary figures to his court as well as artists, and he integrated them into his daily routine. Agostino Mosti's chronicle of court life suggests the rather elevated level of the duke's entertaining: "There were always entertainments, including chess and other games; but not these alone, for there was also music, and readings from romances, especially since the poetry of Count Matteo Maria Boiardo was much appreciated, as were the first proofs of Ariosto's *Orlando*

Furioso; likewise comedies and tragedies were read, some of which had already been staged, and stories from the Old Testament."¹⁷ Note-worthy are both the variety of Alfonso's interests and the way they continued traditions of Este patronage; his father's love of theatrical events had been well known, and the court had been gathered for readings in the time of Leonello. Equally important, and illuminating about Alfonso's character, is his custom of nurturing the various artists and members of his court, many of them "until death."¹⁸ Above all, as Giovio tells us, Alfonso was driven by his desire to build, fortify, and sustain his city, an ambition apparent in all of his actions as duke.

Dosso weaves in and out of this picture from the time of his arrival at court about 1514. Alfonso may have learned of him through his

connections at nearby Mantua, where Dosso worked in 1512 (see p. 4), and where he remained welcome. There is reason to believe that as early as 1513, the artist was part of Alfonso's entourage on a visit to Rome. Soon trusted by the duke, Dosso was sent on various missions, and the relationship between the two was surely cordial, for they traveled together. Vasari stressed their rapport in his biography of Dosso. When Raphael needed to justify his tardiness in delivering a painting to the duke, he entrusted to Dosso the formulation and delivery of his message.¹⁹ Dosso was to be found working throughout the Castello at Ferrara in both the most important and the most private rooms, as well as in the other ducal residences. Many of his most personal and poetic images relate directly to Alfonso, whose character he clearly knew well and who, in turn, allowed Dosso's particular genius to thrive.

THE CAMERINO

Of all the artistic commissions he awarded in the early years of his rule, the one to which Alfonso gave his most devoted attention and that best reflected his ambitions was the decoration of his private rooms in the Castello, the centerpiece of which he called "il nostro camerino," our little room. It was there that he sought his moments of cultured leisure and, according to Mosti, entertained his closest companions. When completed, this room displayed three masterpieces by Titian, one of Bellini's last and greatest works, and major paintings by Dosso that included a Bacchanal and an extensive frieze of scenes from Virgil's *Aeneid* (figs.

20–22, 18; cat. nos. 19, 24). If Alfonso had had his way, the room would also have included paintings by Fra Bartolommeo, Raphael, and possibly Michelangelo. Although his plans were partially frustrated, the duke could nonetheless congratulate himself on the creation of one of the most splendid and widely admired princely interiors of the Renaissance. Because it is paradigmatic of Alfonso's ambitions as a patron and because of Dosso's integral role in its creation, the Camerino warrants extended examination.

The Location of the Camerino

An abundance of new information about the complicated building history of the Camerino, or, more precisely, Alfonso's various *camerini*, has emerged in the last years, but many questions remain unresolved. Prominent among these is the exact location of the room or rooms to which all this attention was given, because the decorations themselves were dismantled at the end of the sixteenth century, and references to their location are far from clear. In the intricate complex of buildings that included both the palace and the castle, they were in the section known as the Via Coperta (figs. 17, 19)—a relatively narrow stretch connecting the castle, to the north, with the palace quarters. Its name (Covered Way) refers to its original function as a covered, indeed secret, passage; in addition it had a suite of rooms above. Although the massive, moated castle had remained primarily a defensive retreat for much of the fifteenth century, residential quarters had been arranged within its fortified walls during the reign of Alfonso's father. It may well be that Eleonora,

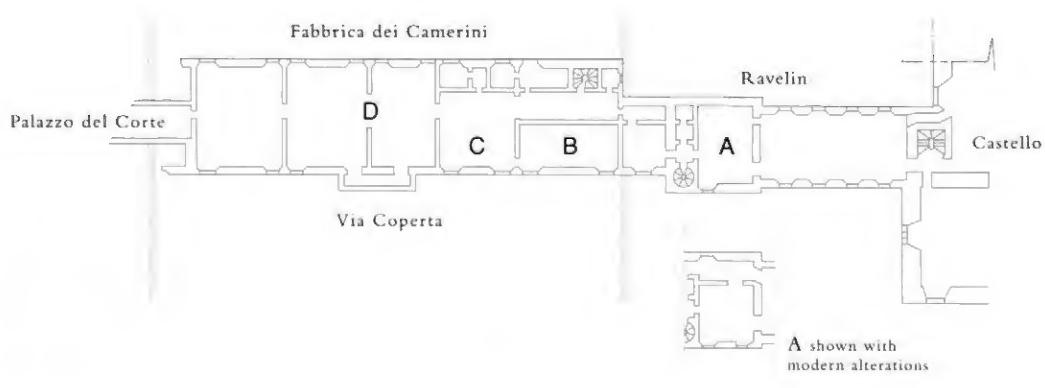


Fig. 19. Ground plan of the Via Coperta and ravelin of the castle complex at Ferrara, adapted from Hope 1987, p. 28

- A Possible location of Camerino in the ravelin
- B Possible location of Camerino in the Via Coperta
- C Probable location of Alfonso I's bedroom
- D Camera del Poggio



Fig. 20. Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*. Oil on canvas. © National Gallery, London

Alfonso's mother, the duchess of Aragon, felt more protected there; an abortive palace coup had forced her to flee with her infants from the Palazzo del Corte, through the Via Coperta, and into the castle. There the growing family made itself at home, creating gardens and even taking over the moat for boating in the summer and skating in the winter. It was thus natural that both Ercole and Alfonso were concerned with the appearance of the passage between the two principal wings of the complex.

The Via Coperta had been built by Ercole in 1471 and renovated by him in 1499.²⁰ Alfonso began to order more far-reaching changes in or near the Via Coperta in 1505; these culminated in the construction in 1508 of a chapel and of a study decorated with marble, the *studio di marmi fini* (studio of fine marbles), usually called the Studio di Marmo. Some, if not all, of the set of reliefs by Antonio Lombardo were installed in this room. Work stopped on the studio during the tense moments in 1509 when the War of the League of Cambrai began, and the scaffolding was not finally dismantled until 1511. Then in 1515, work was done again in a gallery that is described as being close to both a *camerino* and a *studio*. Most significantly, in 1518–19 Alfonso undertook a major building program, the

so-called *fabbrica dei camerini*.²¹ The Via Coperta was widened and a suite of rooms was either newly constructed or renovated above. Numerous documents show that these were magnificently fitted out with marble floors, glass and crystal windows, and gilded ceilings. Dosso was often recorded at work there, painting ceilings and much else, between 1520 and 1529.²²

But where exactly was the Camerino, with its paintings by Titian, Bellini, and Dosso? Neither of the two principal locations suggested for it can be demonstrated with certainty (see fig. 19). It has traditionally been assumed that the Camerino was in the Via Coperta. However, Dana Goodgal, basing her conclusions on a variety of documents concerning the rooms, has recently argued that it and the Studio di Marmo were in an adjacent section of the complex—the ravelin—located directly over the moat and reached from one of the corner towers of the castle by a drawbridge.²³ Charles Hope and others have argued equally vigorously for the traditional location, pointing out flaws in Goodgal's hypothesis and quoting from a late-sixteenth-century chronicle from the neighboring city of Modena in which the *camerini*, said to contain "most excellent pictures by various painters," are described as "over the vaults of the fish market."²⁴ This description can refer only to the Via Coperta, which indeed extended over the fish market in the square below. It may not be possible to resolve this controversy, despite the documentary evidence presented with such thoroughness by the authors just mentioned. It seems appropriate, however, to ask which of the two locations was a more commodious and convenient setting for so important yet private a room; the Via Coperta meets these criteria better than the ravelin. Goodgal's reconstruction of the room in the rather cramped space of the ravelin calls for one of Titian's paintings to hang high on the wall over a door. The room in the Via Coperta closest to the castle would have allowed a more spacious arrangement, in which the three paintings described at the end of the century as hanging together could have been accommodated on the long wall (see below). Furthermore, it was to the Via Coperta that Alfonso devoted his attention. Even today the



Fig. 21. Titian, *The Worship of Venus*. Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid



Fig. 22. Titian, *Bacchanal of the Andrians*. Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid

rooms bear his imprint throughout: marble door frames are inscribed with his name; the balcony for which Titian sent a design is still in place outside the Camera del Poggiolo (Room of the Balcony). Contemporaries noted that the duke enjoyed being in these rooms, above the bustle of the markets, and retired there with his friends. On balance it seems likely that the Camerino was among them.

The Decoration of the Camerino

By referring to descriptions of the Camerino by Vasari and a later letter describing some of its contents, we can more or less visualize its arrangement.²⁵ Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (fig. 20) hung alone on one wall. His *Worship of Venus* and *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (figs. 21, 22) flanked Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* (fig. 18) on a contiguous long wall. On the adjoining wall hung a painting by Dosso, described by Vasari as a *Bacchanal*. A painting by the Friulian artist Pellegrino da San Daniele, the *Indian Triumph of Bacchus* after a *modello* by Raphael, may also have hung there for a time; any reconstruction of the room must allow for the possible inclusion of this painting, although it was gone by the time the 1598 inventory was taken. Above these was

a frieze by Dosso consisting of ten panels of subjects taken from the *Aeneid*, which were mentioned by Vasari and then described at some length in correspondence when they were given by Cesare d'Este to Cardinal Scipione Borghese in 1608 (see cat. nos. 19, 24). It is not clear whether Dosso's painting of "Mars and Venus, and Vulcan in a grotto" was part of the *Aeneid* frieze (Venus requested Vulcan to make arms for Aeneas) or a narrative element of his *Bacchanal*, which contained a conspicuous suit of armor. All of these paintings were probably in place by 1525–29.

A long road had led to the implementation of this final scheme that so highlighted the work of Titian and Dosso and scenes of bacchanalian revelry. As early as 1511, during a period of illness and troubles with Pope Julius II, Alfonso seems to have diverted himself with ideas for the decoration of a room. In October of that year, Equicola, who spent time at the courts of both Ferrara and Mantua, wrote to Isabella d'Este that he had been delayed in Ferrara by Alfonso: "The Lord Duke wants me to stay eight days: the reason is the painting of a room in which will go six fables or histories; I have already found them and written them down."²⁶ In their search for classically based sources,



Fig. 23. Conrad Metz, after Raphael, *Indian Triumph of Bacchus*, from *Imitations of Ancient and Modern Drawings...* (London, 1793). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1912, transferred from the Library (1991.1073.4). The print probably reproduces the composition of Raphael's *modello* for the Camerino.

Equicola and Alfonso consulted a copy of Philostratus the Younger's *Imagines* that had been borrowed from Isabella and that in 1515 she complained her brother had not returned. Philostratus's *ekphraseis*, or rhetorical descriptions of ancient paintings, were to be among the sources for several of the Camerino pictures.

Alfonso may not have been able to get on with his project immediately—his disputes with Pope Julius soon culminated in the aforementioned destruction of Michelangelo's monumental bronze—but he probably had the room decoration in mind throughout 1512 and 1513. As we have seen, in July 1512 Alfonso went to Rome and more or less extorted the promise of a painting from Michelangelo; probably he was thinking then of the Camerino, as he was the following March when he returned to Rome enthusiastic about ordering additional pictures. Indeed, Agostino Mosti wrote that the death of Julius II liberated Alfonso, allowing him to turn his attention to the Camerino.²⁷ It may have been during this latter visit to Rome that Alfonso commissioned a work from Raphael, who was paid an advance of fifty ducats by the duke's brother, Cardinal Ippolito, the following year.²⁸

The first painting actually delivered for the Camerino was Bellini's *Feast of the Gods*, which is dated 1514. The lineup of artists involved—

Michelangelo, Raphael, Bellini—makes it clear that the duke not only had thought about the subjects to be represented in his special chamber but had determined to have the greatest artists of the day realize them. In this he put himself in direct competition with his sister Isabella, who sought to have the pantheon of great artists represented in her *studiolo* and “grotto” in the ducal palace at Mantua. In 1516 Fra Bartolommeo, the Florentine master, was added to Alfonso's group; he visited Ferrara and undertook to paint the *Worship of Venus*, which was left incomplete on his death in 1517. Indeed, the duke's plans went largely unfulfilled—for no paintings by Michelangelo, Raphael, or Fra Bartolommeo ever hung in the Camerino.

In the case of Raphael, an unfortunate twist of fate intervened. Alfonso had been desperate to obtain a Raphael, and from 1517 until Raphael's death in 1520 the endless stream of correspondence between the duke, his agents in Rome, and the artist provides a fascinating glimpse into the world of high-powered artistic patronage.²⁹ Having received his advance payment in 1514, Raphael set to work designing his intended work, the *Indian Triumph of Bacchus*. We hear no more about it until 1517. In March of that year he had probably not yet begun the picture, but by September he was able to send the drawn *modello* of the scene to Ferrara (see fig. 23). Then, according to a report by Beltrando Costabili, Alfonso's ambassador in Rome, word came to Raphael that his drawing was being used at Alfonso's court by Pellegrino da San Daniele as the basis for a painting.³⁰ Irritated, Raphael refused to proceed; he would, however, embark on another subject at the duke's request. Raphael apparently stuck to his decision, forcing the duke to devise a new subject for him and pay another advance of fifty ducats.

For three years, Alfonso attempted to hurry Raphael along with the new assignment, the *Hunt of Meleager*, mentioned by that title in a letter to Alfonso in 1519. But these were extremely busy years for Raphael, who had numerous commissions from the pope and other members of the Medici family. Thus in May of 1518 Alfonso learned through Costabili that Raphael

had just finished two works done for the French court at the request of the Medici and that Costabili had reminded Raphael of his duty to Alfonso. That summer, certainly in response to prodding, Raphael sent Alfonso a list of his many obligations to the pope, above all for architectural projects, while assuring Alfonso that his painting had been started. And so it went, through 1519 and into 1520, when Alfonso resorted to a white lie: urging Raphael to finish, he told him that his was the only work missing from the otherwise complete Camerino. When Raphael died in April of that year having gotten no further, his pupils offered to carry out the commission, but Alfonso was not interested.

The gap left open by the missing luminaries would be spectacularly filled by two artists, Titian and Dosso.³¹ Titian's first recorded trip to Ferrara took place in 1516, and although he probably painted the *Tribute Money* (Staatliche Gemäldegalerie, Dresden) for Alfonso at that time, he was not yet involved with the Camerino. After Fra Bartolommeo's death, the commission for the *Worship of Venus* was given to Titian in March 1518; by April he had received a carefully measured stretcher and canvas, as well as a small drawing and instructions for the painting's subject. Later that month, through Alfonso's agent in Venice, Jacopo Tebaldi, Titian asked for clarification of the intended placement of the picture. (His letter demonstrates that the artist had seen the Camerino—in whatever state it then existed—and was thinking about light sources, and, perhaps, about the relationship of his painting to Bellini's *Feast of the Gods*.) By September of the following year, poor Alfonso, struggling with Raphael, began to be agitated about the delivery of Titian's painting. Luckily, the very next month Tebaldi was able to report that Titian was on his way to Ferrara with it.³²

Soon after Raphael's death and the definitive collapse of Alfonso's hopes for a work by the greatest Central Italian painter, the duke commissioned Titian to paint *Bacchus and Ariadne*. Unlike the *Worship of Venus*, this was not an exact replacement for an unfulfilled commission. Perhaps this story of Bacchus was meant instead to complement or supplant the existing



Fig. 24. X-radiograph of detail of Giovanni Bellini's *The Feast of the Gods*, showing architecture added to the center of Bellini's landscape by Dosso and later painted out by Titian (compare fig. 18)

Indian Triumph of Bacchus by Pellegrino da San Daniele, done after Raphael's design. Here again Alfonso was forced to be patient: in December of 1521, Tebaldi reported that he was waging war with Titian to get him to finish the painting; in August of 1523 he wrote again, encouragingly, of having seen the unfinished work in Titian's studio (this letter is an important source of information about Titian's working methods). Finally, in 1523 Titian delivered *Bacchus and Ariadne* and was almost immediately commissioned to paint another bacchic scene, the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*. On one of his visits to Ferrara in 1524 or 1525 he must have brought that painting with him and finished it in situ. Although it was the last of his paintings for the Camerino, he then took on a task that is odd to modern sensibilities, that of repainting the background landscape of Bellini's picture;³³ nor was this the first time the painting had been tampered with. In fact, Dosso had already partly repainted the background, probably in an effort to unify the landscapes of the paintings in the group, and had added some classicizing cityscape details—which were painted out, in turn, by Titian (fig. 24).³⁴

Dosso's substantial and much admired contribution to the Camerino has been overshadowed by the works of Bellini and Titian, in part because so much of his work is now lost. For this most prestigious of spaces, Dosso painted one large canvas and a long frieze divided

into a number of sections with scenes from the *Aeneid*. As we have seen, it is not a simple matter to identify the subject of the large canvas. Vasari described it twice, in his Life of Girolamo da Carpi and his Life of Titian. In the former he called it a “Bacchanal of men,” adding that the work was so fine that had Dosso done nothing else, he would have earned a reputation as an excellent painter for this alone. In the latter biography Vasari’s memory seems to conflate this painting with the frieze above the principal pictures, confusing matters.

Three paintings have been put forward as candidates for this important work: the painting now called *The Bath* in the Castel Sant’Angelo, Rome (cat. no. 55); the *Bacchanal* in the National Gallery, London (fig. 2); and the *Allegory of Music* in Florence (cat. no. 25). Unfortunately, none can be identified with the *Bacchanal* belonging to Alfonso, which must be considered lost. When Ferrara devolved to the papacy in 1598, Dosso’s painting, along with four others in the Camerino, went to the Aldobrandini family in Rome, where it appeared in their numerous inventories. From the earliest of these, done in 1603 and 1626, we learn that the work included representations of many gods, a ram, a chameleon, and a suit of armor, while later in the century the description expanded to include a Vulcan and a sleeping female figure.³⁵ Nonetheless, the exact subject of the painting remains unknown: possibly it was the episode in which Bacchus, having gotten Vulcan drunk, leads him back to Olympus to release Juno from a magic throne in which Vulcan has ensnared her—one of the rare instances of Bacchus and Vulcan appearing together.³⁶ However, given the presence in the painting of armor and a ram, and Vasari’s immediately preceding mention of a Mars and a Venus, other possible themes cannot be ruled out, especially those involving Aeneas (whose mother, Venus, had a suit of armor made for him). The coincidence of the painted chameleon, prominently noted in the Aldobrandini inventories, with a live one mentioned in some Este correspondence of 1519 has led to a likely, albeit circumstantial, dating of the painting to that year, which came in a period of intense activity in the Camerino.³⁷ Fate has

been kinder to the Aeneas frieze, of which at least two and possibly three sections have survived (see cat. nos. 19, 24), having left Este hands under less-than-honest circumstances at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

From this brief history of the room, it is clear that the choice of subjects for its decoration evolved over time. While Equicola may have suggested six subjects in 1511, Alfonso obviously felt free to vary them as he went—for example, he assigned a Hunt of Meleager to Raphael but then dropped it upon the artist’s death—and it is very possible that other advisers were called in along the way. Indeed, the complexity of the classical source material involved in the eventual commissions suggests that this was so. The *Worship of Venus*, assigned first to Fra Bartolommeo and then to Titian, is based on a description of an antique painting found in Philostratus’s *Imagines* (1:6). As other paintings of the series are also based on such ekphrastic descriptions, it may be that Alfonso and Equicola were initially inspired by the idea of re-creating the kind of picture gallery in a princely villa whose conceit lies behind Philostratus’s text. Much more than that went into the inventions of these scenes, however, as Bellini’s *Feast of the Gods* and Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* show. The principal subject of Bellini’s painting is to be found in Ovid’s *Fasti* (1:391–440), in which Priapus is thwarted in his love for the nymph Lotus when Silenus’s ass brays as he approaches the sleeping nymph. Instead of concentrating on this dramatic moment of betrayal—here the ass is shown silent, not braying—Bellini paints a feast of Bacchus with a rare depiction of the god of wine as an infant. For this detail Equicola may have turned to the ancient writer Macrobius, giving additional depth to the picture’s references to the antique. Likewise, there are numerous allusions to marriage throughout the painting (although Edgar Wind’s suggestion that one of the pairs of gods and goddesses represents Alfonso and his bride, Lucrezia, has been discredited); they derive from various sources and add yet another level of meaning. Despite these variations and refinements, the program remains an “imitation” of Ovid, for the

Renaissance conception permitted and indeed encouraged the free adaptation of a text.³⁸ Since the painting was complete in 1514, it is likely that this layered narrative was conceived by Equicola in 1511 or shortly thereafter.

Titian would have received detailed instructions before beginning *Bacchus and Ariadne* in 1520. Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (I:529ff.) is its most important source, but recent studies have added two relevant and interesting others, both *ekphraseis*, one ancient and the one contemporaneous. Catullus's *Carmina* (LXIV:50–75, 251–64) includes a description of an embroidered wedding couch with scenes of Ariadne and the arrival of Bacchus. It seems hardly a coincidence that the text by Catullus that most precisely accords with Titian's depiction is an edition with commentary by Battista Guarino, a humanist at the court of Ferrara with whom Alfonso studied. Ready for publication in 1520 (when it received its papal *privilegio*; it was probably written earlier) and published in 1521, the edition was dedicated to Alfonso himself.³⁹ An *ekphrasis* on the same subject appeared as well in a famous poem by the Florentine poet Angelo Poliziano. A near contemporary of whoever formulated the instructions for Titian's project, Poliziano too would have gone back to Ovid and Catullus. Given the quiet competition between the Este and Medici courts, subtle emulation of Poliziano may be at work in the conception of *Bacchus and Ariadne* for Alfonso.⁴⁰ John Shearman has suggested that the creator of Titian's program was the poet Ludovico Ariosto, author of the greatest epic poem of the sixteenth century, *Orlando Furioso*. The major figure at Alfonso's court in those years, Ariosto would naturally have been consulted on such a task. The poem, with its tightly woven allusions to a multiplicity of sources, parallels the densely layered quality of *Bacchus and Ariadne*: both are self-consciously intertextual. Indeed, references to the two *ekphraseis* are embedded within crucial passages of the *Furioso*, which was first published in 1516.⁴¹ In 1520, when Titian began work on the painting, Ariosto was in Ferrara and Equicola in Mantua. The two often corresponded companionably about poetic matters, and a 1519 contact is documented; they could

easily have communicated their respective ideas for the Camerino.

All of this activity was at Alfonso's service, and it is remarkable how the Camerino reflects his interests in ways both big and small. His role in its planning and execution should not be underestimated, for the works he elicited from all the artists were resonant with meaning for himself and his court. When Titian received his instructions for the *Worship of Venus* in the spring of 1518, he complimented the duke on an invention that "seemed to me so beautiful and ingenious" and concluded that "in this painting I shall have contributed only the body, and Your Excellency shall have contributed the soul, which is the most worthy part that there is in a painting."⁴² Although great care must be taken in interpreting this letter—the sentiment expressed is conventional, the text probably was not composed by Titian himself, and the praise is really directed toward Equicola—Titian's attribution of credit to the duke rings true. Alfonso's involvement at every stage of the planning is documented in dozens of letters and described by every contemporary biographer.

The choice of bacchic themes has often been ascribed to a sensual, frivolous side of the duke's personality, one that is also revealed by his notorious pranks. Venus was a major protagonist in his gallery; the conjunction of Bacchus, wine, and love is oft repeated; and the scenes contain numerous erotic details. For example, in the *Feast of the Gods*, Neptune slips his hand provocatively between the thighs of the goddess Cybele, an unusual gesture very like one found in the depiction of an amorous couple in the fifteenth-century fresco *April* in the nearby Palazzo Schifanoia. Because this detail is so much in harmony with Ferrarese tradition and Alfonso's tastes, it has been hypothesized that it was added to Bellini's painting by Dosso when he was reworking the landscape. The most recent technical examination of the work indicates, however, that the detail is Bellini's, not Dosso's. Therefore the connection with the fresco must be coincidental, but it nonetheless suggests that the "thread of realistic and sensual painting" already existing in Ferrarese art was encouraged under Alfonso's patronage.⁴³



Fig. 25. Antonio Lombardo, *The Forge of Vulcan (The Birth of Athena)*. Marble. Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

However, another aspect of the god Bacchus is that of the conqueror who appears in triumph. This persona was best reflected in Raphael's first commission, the *Indian Triumph of Bacchus*, but Dosso's *Bacchanal*, with its figure of Vulcan and prominent suit of armor, may also have alluded to martial iconography. In the wake of his triumph Bacchus brought peace and harmony, and these, according to Alfonso's biographer, were the duke's aims as well. Another contemporary humanist, Giraldi, wrote that Bacchus brought not license but liberty, and that his arrival in India installed civility and well-being there. Finally, according to Equicola, Bacchus also freed men from worry, a key theme of Alfonso's commissions. The various political and allegorical implications of such readings were made even more explicit in some of the marble reliefs by Antonio Lombardo.⁴⁴

Three of Alfonso's passions—the arts of antiquity, ceramics, and exotic animals—are represented in the paintings for the Camerino. A great interest was taken in animals by numerous rulers throughout Italy, including Pope Leo X, and acquiring them had been a tradition at the Este court for many years. Ercole I, a notable collector of animals, had owned an elephant (a gift from Cypriot merchants) that was later portrayed in a statue at the villa of Belfiore. Alfonso had his own zoo on the island of

Belvedere and acquired animals for it whenever possible but contented himself with mere drawings of them when necessary. Live creatures, including Hanno, the pope's elephant (whose "biography" has been written by John Shearman), a chameleon, and hunting leopards lie behind the representations of those animals in Raphael's *Indian Triumph of Bacchus*, Dosso's *Bacchanal*, and Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*. Throughout the 1520s Dosso was repeatedly called upon to paint pictures of the duke's animals.⁴⁵

Likewise, the very conspicuous inclusion of fine ceramics and other vessels in several paintings surely reflects Alfonso's enthusiasm for these objects. Not only did Bellini and Titian paint magnificent, identifiable vessels in their Bacchanals, but during the same years Alfonso commissioned Titian to design majolica and glassware and oversee production of the latter in Murano.⁴⁶ In 1527 Dosso was at work painting the *camerino in spetiaria*, a room where spices were stored, perhaps in jars made by the duke.⁴⁷

Alfonso's love of the antique permeates the decoration of the Camerino, from the choice of subjects to small details. This is a rich topic, but two examples will give some idea of the subtlety with which Alfonso and his artists appropriated the art and literature of classical times. Dosso's interpretations of the *Aeneid* in the frieze of the Camerino are presented as pastorals, with a continuous narrative of figures set in extensive landscapes (see cat. no. 24 for a more detailed discussion). The narrative does not proceed in linear fashion, nor are the representations exact illustrations of the text; rather, the artist assumes that the viewer will be familiar with the various episodes of the poem and will enjoy making the necessary connections. With their emphasis on evocative landscape, these paintings reflect Alfonso's taste quite precisely, as we shall see.

In Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, the famous figure wreathed in snakes is based on the Hellenistic statue *Laocoön* that was unearthed in Rome in 1506. Titian was inspired by Catullus's lines in which the bacchants (masculine in some Renaissance editions, following the Aldine of 1502) are described as having "girt themselves

with writhing snakes.” This was not the first time the *Laocoön* had been evoked in Alfonso’s *camerini*. The central figure—without the snakes—also appears in Lombardo’s marble relief traditionally known as the *Forge of Vulcan* (fig. 25). Wendy Sheard has suggested that the *Laocoön* was significant to Alfonso on several levels. First, installing in his Studio di Marmo a piece that alluded to the famous antique sculpture so soon after its discovery was a great coup for Alfonso in his simmering sibling rivalry with Isabella d’Este, who was also passionate about antiquity and only later managed to acquire two bronze statuettes after the *Laocoön*. Then, because the sculptural group became part of Leo X’s collection, Titian’s appropriation of its imagery may also have been a disguised expression of Alfonso’s difficult relationship with the pope; indeed, Sheard believes that these mighty figures actually are meant to represent Alfonso in his ongoing political struggles with the papacy. Finally, in its passionate drama, the *Laocoön* represented a taste for a specific type of antique sculpture and a particular moment in the history of ancient art and thus demonstrated the quality of Alfonso’s connoisseurship.⁴⁸

The figure of Vulcan plays a similarly complex role within Alfonso’s personal iconography. As mentioned above, Vulcan is a protagonist in a relief by Lombardo that seems to represent the Birth of Athena (fig. 25). She is about to spring from Zeus’s cloven head, having been released by a blow from Vulcan at his forge, in the center. Vulcan also appears in Dosso’s *Bacchanal* and, beyond the confines of the *camerini*, at least twice more in other paintings by Dosso that in all likelihood are to be associated with Alfonso’s patronage. In the haunting *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25), Vulcan is again the protagonist, while in *Venus and Cupid* (cat. no. 29), he appears in a grotto in the background.

Alfonso would have identified with two aspects of Vulcan above all others: Vulcan the god of metallurgy and Vulcan the inventor of musical notes (who used his hammers of varying weights to achieve different sounds, an event that figures in Ariosto’s comedy *I suppositi*, first performed in 1509; see cat. no. 25, detail). While metalworking ties in with Alfonso’s well-known

interests, the relevance of the allusion to music has only become clear as the result of recent research.⁴⁹ Mosti, whose chronicle is so revealing about Alfonso’s day-to-day life, stated that the duke not only had instruments played during dinner but also often listened in the evening to singers performing motets and French songs, especially during sojourns at his country properties. As we have seen, he designed and constructed instruments; he was in addition a musician himself, playing the viola da braccio during the performance of Plautus’s comedy *Cesina* at the celebration of his marriage to Lucrezia Borgia in 1502. Three composers of international standing—Jean Mouton, Josquin des Prez, and Adrian Willaert—were resident at his court. Alfonso showed great interest in musical novelties, and indeed, novelties figure in at least two of the paintings he commissioned: a perpetual canon in four voices attributed to Willaert is represented in Titian’s *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (fig. 22), and circular and triangular canons appear in Dosso’s *Allegory of Music*.⁵⁰ Thus, Vulcan, especially the Vulcan pictured in the *Allegory of Music*, had such a strong personal resonance for the duke that he can be considered a sort of guardian deity.

The decoration of the Camerino is an accurate rendition of many of the duke’s intellectual preoccupations, translated into paint or marble: his rivalry with his learned sister Isabella; his interest in classical art and literature and possible identification with certain classical figures; his passion for music and more idiosyncratic fondness for ceramics and animals; and his incorporation in rooms intended for leisure and entertainment of decoration that inventively suggested larger themes of his rule. But what can be deduced from it and the Studio di Marmo about Alfonso’s stylistic preferences and his degree of artistic sophistication?

In creating an imposing decoration *all’antica* in the Studio di Marmo, the duke maintained continuity with his father’s interests. Ercole had planned, for example, to have a marble and bronze equestrian statue of himself erected, in emulation of antique prototypes. And the reliefs Lombardo carved for Alfonso are veritable re-creations of antique sculpture—elegant,

refined, and highly finished. But a subtle twist suggests that Alfonso understood ancient art on a new level, differentiating among its various styles. The two narrative panels that most closely refer to the duke, the *Contest between Athena and Poseidon* and the *Forge of Vulcan* (or *Birth of Athena*), display a consciousness of their own particular ancient style. The latter is more animated, more “Hellenistic”; the former is more calmly classical.⁵¹

In the course of time, the scheme for the painted decorations of the Camerino evolved: instead of a collection of single contributions by established masters from Venice, Florence, and Rome, a more unified ensemble was planned, consisting of works by just three artists, Bellini, Titian, and Dosso. In this choice Alfonso was committing himself to a single current in painting: that of Venetian art as shaped by the example of Giorgione. Although the Bellini stands slightly apart from the others, all of the paintings are characterized by their poetic conjunction of figures in a landscape, the comparative looseness with which they are painted, the brilliance of their color, and their overall appeal to the senses. At the same time, they make reference to the antique and to the great contemporary developments in Rome. Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* is, as we have seen, an extremely thoughtful interpretation of antique sources, while various figures in the extant portions of Dosso’s frieze are indebted to Michelangelo’s *Ignudi* in the Sistine Chapel. Despite the range of their allusions, the works are all recognizably part of a single world and thus achieve an entirely different effect from the one envisioned by Alfonso in, say, 1513.

Indeed, the experience of working together for Alfonso created a powerful bond between Dosso and Titian, and we must imagine reciprocal influences and an exchange of views. We know that the two artists traveled together in 1519, when they went to Mantua to see Isabella d’Este’s rooms in the ducal palace and the works by Mantegna displayed there.⁵² That would have been Titian’s first visit to a city in which Dosso, having worked there in 1512, was already at home; and thus Dosso would have led the way.

DOSSO’S OTHER COMMISSIONS FROM ALFONSO

The duke’s high opinion of Dosso is evidenced by the number of pictures the artist produced for his court. Since Alfonso was a discriminating patron with an intense desire to possess works by the greatest contemporary artists, his long-standing satisfaction with Dosso’s work is noteworthy. Over the course of twenty years, dozens of documents relate to commissions Dosso carried out for the duke in the Castello and his other palaces and villas.⁵³ Few extant paintings can be tied to this mass of documentation. However, it is possible to make general inferences from typical works that do survive and thus to surmise not only what kind of art was a source of intellectual excitement to Alfonso, but also what art gave him pleasure and delight.

Alfonso surely appreciated Dosso’s subtle and unique ability to assimilate the ideas of the groundbreaking artists of his day (Giorgione, Titian, Raphael, Michelangelo) without sacrificing his own recognizable style. Indeed, Dosso had crafted an art that at once brilliantly integrated aspects of these larger trends and particularized them in a way that reflected Ferrarese traditions and Alfonso’s own tastes. Dosso’s range—from the sensual and very Venetian *Melissa* (cat. no. 12) through the series of Learned Men (cat. no. 22), based on Michelangelo’s *Ignudi*—demonstrates this ability. In other commissions for Alfonso, Dosso created images that combine an intense study of the natural world with an equally intense, often rough sensuality, as in *Violence* (cat. no. 26g), a painting that hung in Alfonso’s bedroom. A wrinkled satyr grasps a young nymph, pressing against her fleshy breast; a sliced cucumber, carefully described, sits before them on a ledge. But it is above all in paintings like *Melissa*—a work steeped in Ariosto’s poetry, filled with luxuriant nature in which man is embedded—that Dosso showed how precisely attuned he was to the culture of Alfonso’s court.

Alfonso relied on Dosso from the very beginning for a whole gamut of artwork, decoration, and many related assignments. On several occasions he sent the artist to Venice or

Florence, sometimes on undefined “tasks for the Signore,” at other times to buy supplies, including pigments and marble. Payments show that Dosso’s hand was felt throughout the numerous rooms in the Via Coperta, painting its facade as well as its fireplaces and wooden window embrasures, and overseeing the work of the gilders. Beginning in 1519 Dosso was painting the “cornixoti” of the rooms, that is, the areas directly below the ceiling; some of these paintings were the Aeneas scenes in the Camerino. Other ceiling paintings are recorded from 1521 on, and from 1524 through 1526 Dosso was paid for executing a large tondo that was set into the carved and gilded ceiling of the Camera del Poggiolo at the center of the Via Coperta. Substantial fragments of this decoration have been identified: they show a man embracing a woman and a boy holding a bunch of flowers, all overhanging a parapet as if they are looking into the room below (cat. no. 32). The tondo was ultimately inspired by Mantegna’s illusionistic ceiling in the Camera degli Sposi of the ducal palace at Mantua and is thus another example of the fact that Alfonso’s actions as a patron were often related to (if not in outright competition with) those of the Gonzaga family into which his sister had married.

Dosso also painted a series of nine panels for the ceiling of Alfonso’s bedroom in the Via Coperta. Seven of the panels still exist: five are now in Modena, and two others are in Venice and Eger (see cat. no. 26). Like the ceiling of the Camera del Poggiolo, their meaning is mysterious; some of the pictures, such as *Music*, are straightforward in subject, while others, including the one known as *Anger* or *The Quarrel*, are obscure. The works probably present allegories of the senses, and it has been suggested that they were meant as comedic counterparts to the more serious decoration of the Camerino nearby. Their essential impact is of sensuality and passion rather than comedy, however. Set behind parapets dotted with suggestively placed vegetables and flowers, the figures embrace, struggle, sing, and gaze at each other and the viewer. Some areas are painted broadly, whereas details, such as embroidered collars, hair ribbons,

and petals, are done with great finesse and touched by a scintillating light. Seen together in a relatively small room, these paintings must have had an extraordinary power and presence. They indicate the quality of the decoration once extensive throughout the castle and now unfortunately lost. Included in the number is the frieze of sixteen landscapes Dosso painted for this room. Their loss is particularly grievous because Dosso’s reputation as a landscape painter was based on such works—and they demonstrate Alfonso’s fondness for this genre, which he chose for his most private chamber.

While Dosso was decorating Alfonso’s private rooms in the Via Coperta, he was also much occupied with other commissions for the court. These consisted of a variety of paintings, including pictures of flowers and animals (interestingly, as those subjects later became a well-known North Italian specialty) and portraits (including two of Alfonso’s son Ercole). Dosso was occasionally charged with sprucing up existing portraits, such as one owned by Isabella d’Este, depicting her parents. Nor was the artist exempted from carrying out the kind of courtly tasks that seem minor to us—painting an *impresa*, or emblem, for Ercole’s hat, and crests for containers of fireworks for the carnival in 1536.

More notable commissions were for city views. Eleonora, Alfonso’s mother, had had views of her native Naples painted in the loggia overlooking the garden where she preferred to sit.⁵⁴ In 1522 Dosso was asked to paint a “portrait” of the city of Ferrara. He worked on it until about 1524, framed it only in 1526, and in fact went back to update it in 1526 and again in 1531. The painting included a depiction of another of Alfonso’s fortresses, the Castel Novo, on the banks of the Po River; a separate payment for a drawing of the fortress was made in 1526. Its inclusion in the picture of Ferrara may indicate an emphasis on military architecture and the city’s strongholds, although it must be remembered that the Castel Novo also provided living quarters for part of the court. Unfortunately, neither the exact purpose of Dosso’s view nor where it hung is known, but Isabella d’Este—almost certainly inspired by their



Fig. 26. Dosso and Battista Dossi, *Saint Michael and the Assumption of the Virgin*, originally in the Duomo, Reggio Emilia. Oil on panel. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Parma

mother's example—asked for drawings of it as the basis of a city view for her own loggia at Mantua.

Because so much of Alfonso's patronage was inspired by precedents in Mantua, it comes as no surprise to find that Francesco II Gonzaga had had city views painted in his villa at Gonzaga in the 1490s. Alfonso's interest in such works is also suggested by his purchase of a printed view of Venice (possibly Jacopo de' Barbari's famous map) in 1517.⁵⁵ In 1527 Dosso was asked to paint a second Este town, Carpi; the stipulation that his work include measurements suggests that it was based on a survey drawing. Both of these views were meant to convey the magnificence of the Este dominions. In a comparable commission in 1562, Alfonso II had the hall of a Venetian palace hung with tapestries showing the principal cities of his dominion—Ferrara, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Carpi, and Bressello. According to the description in a commemorative book of Alfonso II's entrance into Venice,

the viewer could discover in these tapestries “entirely, and with beautiful effects of perspective, each city's streets and palaces.”⁵⁶ No doubt Dosso's paintings were equally revelatory of Ferrara and Carpi at the time of Alfonso I.

Dosso's more specialized work for the court after 1526 included decorating stage sets and the court theater. The importance of theater in the Este court cannot be overestimated. Ercole I had been a major early proponent of Italian theater. Indeed, Gardner claimed that from 1486 on, Ercole's court is where the “real beginning of the Italian drama” was to be found, with the comedies of Plautus and Terence revived and the works of contemporaries such as Boiardo performed. Ercole sponsored at least thirteen productions of ancient comedies in translation.⁵⁷ It is difficult to say from where he drew inspiration for these innovations; but isolated performances had long been sponsored by the court, as exemplified by the performance of *Iside*, by Francesco Ariosto il Pellegrino, under Leonello in 1445. Initially staged outdoors in the courtyard of Ercole's palace, with spectators in grandstands and the court watching from balconies, the comedies were soon brought inside to the Sala Grande, a very large rectangular room with a stage at one end and numerous rows of seats (called the *tribunale*), which rose above the level of the windows. Evening performances were famous for the beauty of the lighting effects. Some grand performances were given in the principal room of the Palazzo del Ragione. Ercole planned and began constructing a separate theater, to be called the Sala delle Commedie, which would have been the first such space in Italy, but the project was abandoned after his death.⁵⁸

Alfonso and his wife, Lucrezia Borgia, sponsored an equally active theatrical program in the first years of their reign. When Ludovico Ariosto's first comedy, *Cassaria*, was mounted in 1508, it was performed amid much-admired scenery—actually painted for another production—of a cityscape with houses, churches, towers, and gardens, done by Pellegrino da San Daniele.⁵⁹ After 1509 there was a long hiatus; performances resumed on a regular basis only in 1528. Dosso is recorded as having painted the

grandstands in 1526 and 1528, and he almost certainly painted scenery for the first verse production of *Cassaria*, given on the occasion of the marriage of Ercole II to Renée of France.⁶⁰

The remarkably secular slant of Dosso's court work for Alfonso should by now be clear. Certainly the artist was called on to carry out a few religious commissions, especially in the chapel on the property called the Boschetto, usually known as the Belvedere, where from 1519 on he was also responsible for much of the other decoration. For Dosso's great religious commissions, however, we must look beyond Alfonso and often outside Ferrara—to Alfonso's counselor Antonio Costabili for the monumental altarpiece of 1513 (cat. no. 6), painted by Dosso and Garofalo for the church of Sant' Andrea; or to the confraternity known as the Mensa Comune for the altarpiece now in the Duomo at Modena (fig. 1), one of three important works Dosso sent to that city; or to the Lateran nuns at the church of the Santissima Annunziata in Cremona, who commissioned the striking *Saint Sebastian* of about 1526, now in the Brera in Milan (fig. 8).

Late in his life Alfonso did turn to Dosso, then assisted by his younger brother Battista, for a religious commission with significant political overtones. In 1527 the cities of Modena and Reggio Emilia, taken from the duchy by Pope Julius II in 1510, were returned to Este rule by Emperor Charles V, who confirmed this action during his coronation in Bologna in 1530. Alfonso commissioned two pictures in thanksgiving for the event. The first, *Votive Nativity with God the Father*, was placed in the cathedral at Modena in a chapel granted to the duke in 1532. The second, *Saint Michael and the Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 26), was for the cathedral at Reggio Emilia, where, upon hearing of the return of the cities to his dominion, Alfonso had sworn he would dedicate an altar to Saint Michael. Dosso received payments for both works throughout 1533 and 1534, and they seem to have been completed then, although the *Nativity* was not installed in Modena until 1536, after Alfonso's death.⁶¹ These paintings by Dosso and Battista, with their new elaboration of detail in figures and landscape, mark an

important transition to the last pictures of Dosso's career and the works of the succeeding generation.

THE DELIZIE

Like his predecessors, Alfonso was deeply involved in the decoration of his suburban and country villas, called *delizie* ("delights") by the Ferrarese. Their large number and their importance in the lives of the dukes are unique to the Este court. Each of the Este rulers built residences of this type, and some of them—like the famous Belriguardo—were enormous compounds of buildings and gardens (fig. 27). As early as 1385 and 1391, respectively, the *delizie* of Schifanoia and Belfiore were built on the periphery of the city, decorated from the outset with coats of arms and *imprese*, or scenes from chivalric tales. Unfortunately, the almost total later destruction of the villas has greatly distorted our understanding of both court life in Ferrara and the artistic achievement of the court artists.

In the fifteenth century the villa of Belfiore, constructed at the northern limit of the city following the building of the new walls in the 1490s, absorbed the attention of Leonello, Borso, and Ercole I in turn. Set within a splendid

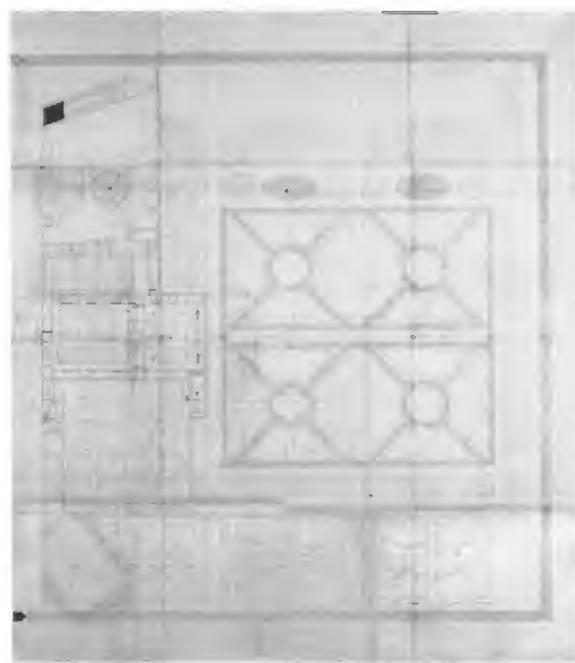


Fig. 27. Ground plan of the villa and gardens of Belriguardo

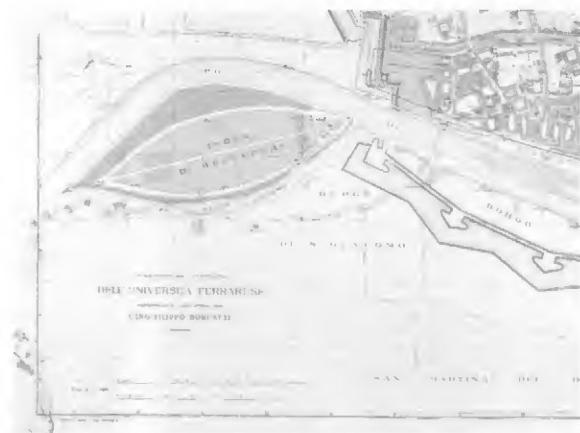


Fig. 28. Map of the villa and grounds of Belvedere

park used for hunting, the building was celebrated for its tapestries, works of art, and decoration. At mid-century Leonello displayed a triptych by Rogier van der Weyden there, and there too he had his famous studiolo decorated with a painted series of Muses—a landmark in humanist painting—the program of which was devised by the scholar Guarino Veronese.⁶² During Ercole's reign, the walls were frescoed with cycles of images on secular themes that were described at length by the humanist Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti. These remarkable paintings included scenes from the daily

Fig. 29. Detail of Dosso Dossi, *The Three Ages of Man* (cat. no. 10)



life of the court and, in particular, the life of Eleonora d'Este, Alfonso's mother.⁶³ They glorified Ercole in all his ducal magnificence and concentrated on the pursuits of the prince, with hunting and exotic animals predominating. Mantegna's frescoes in the Camera degli Sposi in Mantua are of the same kind (although individualized by the brilliance of the artist), but the frescoes of Belfiore must be imagined on a grander scale. The villa remained an important residence under Alfonso; his marriage accord with Lucrezia Borgia was reached there. Because the paintings of the Muses are still extant and the now-destroyed villa was described at length in the late fifteenth century, it remains one of the easiest for us to visualize.

Alfonso and, following him, his son Ercole II concentrated on three of these residences: Boschetto, or Belvedere; Belriguardo (for which, see below); and the so-called Montagna, or Montagnone, di San Giorgio. The Montagna di San Giorgio was named for the artificial mountain created from the soil unearthed in the ongoing process of digging ditches for the foundations of Alfonso's fortifications. Planted with woods and landscaped with pergolas, grottoes, labyrinths, and tricky waterworks, this villa was an expression of the duke's love of efficient planning and desire to see his city made strong, as well as of his yearning for natural beauty. The building was designed by the painter and architect Girolamo da Carpi, and Giovio tells us that it was full of pictures.⁶⁴

The Belvedere was the *delizia* closest to Alfonso's heart. It was built on a property called the Boschetto on a small oval island (fig. 28) in the branch of the Po that ran through the city immediately adjacent to one of its oldest fortresses, the Castel Tedaldo.⁶⁵ There Alfonso constructed a villa with two towers, surrounded by a garden, with a vast wild park outside its gates in which he kept his wild animals, "elephants, ostriches, and others." Ariosto refers to this villa in *Orlando Furioso* (XLIII:56), describing an island that is at first "deserted and neglected" but one day becomes "adorned and beautiful." Giovio too felt the Belvedere to be one of the most delightful of locations, perfectly fitting the magnificence and grandeur of a prince, and .

Alfonso's adviser Calcagnini described it at length in verse. In a biography of the duke written late in the century, his attachment to the Belvedere is recounted at length and his days there described as a time of princely leisure and a true escape from the labor of governing. It was at this residence that Pope Paul III was entertained during his visit to Ferrara in 1543.⁶⁶ Dosso worked extensively at the Belvedere, from 1519 through 1522 in its chapel and then beginning in 1526 on the decoration of its many rooms. He was particularly engaged in painting friezes, much as he had in the Via Coperta of the Castello.

Dosso's role in the decoration of these *delizie* is a key to understanding his high position at Alfonso's court. The great secular paintings, including those we can only assume were painted for him, are imbued with the very qualities that made the residences and the way of life they provided so attractive to the Este family. They offered a temporary escape, for although the court continued to carry out its work while at these villas, the duke and his family could devote themselves to the hunt or to their animals, gardens, music, books, and guests. In every case it was the setting itself that especially attracted the Este dukes (the Belvedere was called a *locus amoenus*, lovely place). In Dosso, Alfonso found an artist who could represent this rustic world. Landscape predominates in paintings like *The Three Ages of Man*, *Travelers in a Wood*, and *Scene from a Legend* (cat. nos. 10, 11, 19), justifying Giovio's famous description of Dosso's works as *parerga*, or pleasant diversions. Giovio's text was written in Latin; in an Italian translation of it, the word *delizia* actually appears in the characterization of Dosso's landscapes: "pleasant diversions of painting [he] used to depict jagged rocks, green groves, the firm banks of traversing rivers, the flourishing work of the countryside, the gay and hard toil of the peasants, and also the far distant prospects of land and sea, fleets, fowling, hunting and all that genre."⁶⁷ As E. H. Gombrich long ago showed, this description is culled from a passage in Pliny's *Natural History* about the works of Spurius Tadius, or Studius (xxxv:115–17; Pliny alludes even more pointedly to villas and life in

country houses). Dosso's landscapes are thus given the patina of ancient example so important for a duke concerned with emulating the ancients. Even more desirably, the paintings present an ideal world in which man coexists with a lush and enchanting nature, which is why Alfonso commissioned a great frieze of landscapes by Dosso to encircle his bedroom. Contemporaries like Vasari also recognized Dosso's unique landscape style and considered it one of his principal strengths as an artist (fig. 29).

Landscape is integral to the structure of the poem *Orlando Furioso* in a parallel fashion. Scenes unfold in woods flickering with light and shadow, within groves, alongside streams, as for example in Canto I, where the reader first meets Angelica: "At last she came to a pleasant grove whose trees gently rustled in a delicious breeze; two limpid brooks murmured close by so that the grass was ever fresh and tender; the quiet waters, breaking as they flowed softly over the little pebbles, sounded musically . . . Close by she noticed a beautiful thicket of flowering hawthorn and red roses mirrored in the limpid rippling water and sheltered from the sun by tall shady oaks" (1:35, 37).⁶⁸ This was a vision of pleasure in nature that Alfonso shared and that Dosso's art satisfies as well.

Dosso's great mythological pictures allude to just such a world. Although we cannot be sure that Alfonso commissioned *Melissa*, *Apollo*, or *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* (cat. nos. 12, 28, 27), it is unlikely that they were done for anyone outside his immediate circle. If the sorceress in the first-named painting is indeed *Melissa*, as seems likely, then she specifically derives from Ariosto's poetic vision. In Dosso's interpretation she is a sensual and exotic creature, set within a lush natural world of birds, animals, plants, rolling hills, and a mysterious distant cityscape. Light illuminates the tops of some branches, picks out the edges of the vines creeping around the tree, and glints off the armor (perhaps an allusion to Alfonso's military pursuits).

A pseudo-ancient text by Leon Battista Alberti is the basis for the narrative of *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue*. A woman trying to appeal to Jupiter is barred by Mercury because Jupiter is painting the wings of the butterflies and

PESARO AND TRENTO



Fig. 30. A “granata svampante,” or smoldering grenade, Alfonso I’s personal device. Marble relief. San Cristoforo alla Certosa, Ferrara

cannot be disturbed. Whatever the specific interpretation of this tale (see cat. no. 27), Dosso has emphasized its natural and seasonal aspects, especially by depicting a flower-decked goddess who may be Flora rather than the Virtue of the text.⁶⁹ Jupiter’s thunderbolts, so reminiscent of Alfonso’s favorite armorial device (fig. 30), seem to make a witty connection between the god at his easel and the artistic duke. The figures are seated on clouds shot through by a rainbow; behind them a wonderful landscape of trees and imaginative buildings opens up. In *Apollo*, the same kind of evocative view—with the figure of Daphne nearly engulfed in a grove of trees before a stormy horizon—is the backdrop for a depiction of Apollo crowned with laurel leaves. Shown in the act of singing and playing a lament for Daphne on his instrument, he may be meant to represent the duke, and the picture may be a poignant love offering to Alfonso’s companion of later years, Laura (Eustochia) Dianti (see also cat. no. 30b).⁷⁰ This fascinating woman, who gathered around herself a small group of poets and artists, lived in the Palazzina della Rosa, which had been given to her by the duke. Emblematic decorations in the Palazzina that referred to Laura included Dosso’s ceiling painting of four branches of laurel and a sun against a blue ground. Alfonso’s achievement as a patron is in a way epitomized by these mythological paintings, paintings in which Dosso’s artistry reached its apex.

On two occasions in or around 1530 Dosso left Ferrara to work on major fresco commissions, one in Pesaro and one in Trent. The invitations to work at these two courts show that his reputation had become widespread. Because so much of Dosso’s work in the Castello and the villas of Ferrara has been destroyed, these frescoes are the most important extant examples of his large-scale mural painting.

The earlier work is in the Villa Imperiale, outside Pesaro. Built by Alessandro Sforza in the mid-fifteenth century, it belonged in the 1520s to the duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria I Della Rovere, and his wife, Eleonora Gonzaga. For political reasons they spent a good deal of time in this rural residence, and at the end of the decade they began an extensive program of building and decoration there. The artist Girolamo Genga, employed to oversee the entire project, assembled a group of artists to fresco eight rooms on the main floor in the old section of the villa. The artists came principally from Central Italy, but Dosso and his brother Battista were included, perhaps at the request of the Mantuan Eleonora. The brothers were charged with painting a separate room (rather an honor, as most of the others shared such tasks), which was thereafter known as the Sala delle Cariatidi (fig. 31); they probably contributed decorations elsewhere in the villa as well.

Vasari, who was well acquainted with both Genga and his son but may not ever have visited the Villa Imperiale, related in his Life of Genga an unfavorable anecdote that has colored attitudes toward Dosso’s work there. He says that the duke of Urbino was so displeased with Dosso’s work that it had to be pulled down and redone. Vasari elaborates in his Life of Dosso, as follows: Dosso was called in because of his skill at painting landscapes and promised the duke that he would surpass all of his previous achievements. But he lost the good will of the other artists by criticizing their work, and then—perhaps because the stakes had risen so high, and despite his best efforts—painted not his finest but his worst works. The “ridiculous” final results had to be taken down.⁷¹

A good deal can be said about this harsh account, and in the present context several points should be made. Dosso's most significant frescoes were never torn down and remain even today among the most compelling aspects of the villa's decoration. This does not rule out the possibility that a schism developed within the group assembled by Genga and his patrons, but, although the various personalities may have been at odds, their dispute must have been principally over artistic issues. Having come to the Imperiale expressly as a landscape artist, Dosso was set to work in the room in which "nature" was the predominant theme. Each room probably had a theme, such as "the antique," and the entire program was linked by a continuously changing painted framework of architecture and landscape.⁷² In none of the other rooms, however, was nature portrayed with the exuberance of Dosso's decoration in the Sala delle Cariatidi (fig. 31). Voluptuous caryatids supporting a lush trellis grow from tree trunks thick with vegetation, springs bubbling at their bases. The trellis itself, which frames a historical scene, is made up of marvelously described irregular branches tied together, from which attributes of the gods hang on ribbons. Before and behind the caryatids lies a vast, unimpeded landscape.

It may have been this extraordinarily direct vision—assertively North Italian in its structure and style—that grated on the other artists at Pesaro, whose own landscapes are far more controlled and are dominated by man-made objects. Dosso's frescoes recall those by Lorenzo Lotto in the Oratorio Suardi at Trescore, near Bergamo, with their vigorously intertwined branches covering the ceiling; or those of Diana by Parmigianino in the castle at Fontanellato, near Parma (both, about 1523–24). Nothing, however, really prepares the viewer for the effect created by Dosso's free and playful imagery, the broad application of paint, and many subtle allusions to antiquity. The frescoes may reflect to some degree the frieze of landscapes done earlier for Alfonso, and they were followed by a cycle of related frescoes in the villa at Belriguardo in Ferrara. They demonstrate Dosso's awareness that his reputation as a landscapist—or, painter of *parerga*—allowed him

wide latitude to experiment; perhaps so wide as to irritate more orthodox artists.

Dosso played a much larger and more dominant role in the decoration of the Palazzo del Buonconsiglio, or Magno Palazzo, in Trent. It was the residence of Prince Bishop Cardinal Bernardo Cles (1485–1539), an esteemed clergyman and one of the most important diplomats of his day. About 1527 Cles undertook a major rebuilding and refurbishing of his palace; the fresco work culminated in the great decorations done in 1531–32 by Dosso and his brother Battista, Girolamo Romanino, and Marcello Fogolino.⁷³ Cles, being very complimentary to Dosso, had asked him to come to Trent and suggest projects for the various rooms. Dosso made the trip in late spring 1531 and followed up with a letter containing proposals for the library, the loggia, and other rooms, also reminding Cles that he would need authorization from Alfonso to be absent from Ferrara. Granted that permission, he returned to Trent and worked with his brother in some nineteen areas of the castle from the fall of 1531 to the spring of 1532. It is not known exactly how Cles learned of Dosso or whether he had previously seen any of his work; perhaps here too Dosso's old Mantuan connections stood him in good stead, since Cles knew and energetically emulated the Gonzagas' artistic patronage. Indeed, Giulio Romano, who had left Rome to become court artist at Mantua, complained in 1531 that the city was empty of craftsmen because they had all gone



Fig. 31. Dosso Dossi,
Detail of decoration, Sala
delle Cariatidi. Fresco.
Villa Imperiale, Pesaro



Fig. 32. Girolamo Romanino, *The Chariot of Phaeton*. Fresco. Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trent

off to work at the great palace in Trent.⁷⁴ Nor should it be forgotten that Dosso's family was originally from Trent (see p. 3), a fact that may have boosted his local reputation. In any case, Cles remained extremely satisfied with Dosso's accomplishments, praising the "singular virtues of his work."⁷⁵

Cles was an odd patron, very learned, at home with classical texts and religious iconography, yet vague in his directions to his painters. Concerned with questions of decorum—specifically, what subjects were fitting for public or less public areas of the palace—he nevertheless wanted to give the artists wide latitude. In a letter of 1532 to an overseer about Dosso's proposals for the decorations of the room known as the Stua Grande (the term in local dialect for the large, ornate stove that dominated it), Cles wrote, "Looking at said drawings, [we get the impression] that they are rather things for a church than appropriate for such a place, and we would be much more content with [crossed out: some painting of the Old Testament or] some fable of Ovid, or some other, according to what you think is most appropriate, but we rely on your and [Dosso's] judgment."⁷⁶ This passage indicates how open his instructions were but demonstrates as well his prickliness on the question of propriety. (It was not the only time that Cles left important decisions to Dosso; he did so too with a painting of great importance to him,

a votive fresco in which Saint Vigilio presents the Prince Bishop to the Virgin.)

Working very quickly (and eventually leaving his brother to finish things up), Dosso carried out the vast and complex project of decorating the palace at Trent in less than a year. Each of the rooms is distinctive. Some of the freshest painting appears in minor details, such as friezes and other ornamental areas, the kind of work he had done regularly in Alfonso's residences. It is worth noting, however, that Cles was most satisfied by what to modern eyes was the less inventive of his two principal artists. The frescoes done by the idiosyncratic but brilliant Brescian artist Romanino, which figure among his masterpieces, explode with wit and energy—Phaeton's horses, seen in steep foreshortening, leap across the sky (fig. 32); musicians in contemporary dress spill into our space, sprawled on fictive architecture; sensuous nudes populate the lunettes and spandrels of the great loggia. The bravura of the presentation is matched by the boldness of the artist's brushwork. Nevertheless, Cles was critical of Romanino's painting, specifically with regard to matters of decorum.⁷⁷

Much of Dosso's work seems tame by comparison, perhaps the result of a relative lack of engagement in the task (far from the great court where he habitually worked) or, more likely, of his desire to fulfill Cles's expectations. In the Camera del Camin Nero (Room of the Black Fireplace), an elaborate combination of stucco and painting illustrates a complex iconography of the liberal arts, the four virtues, profiles of emperors, and allegorical scenes (fig. 33). The illusionism of the ceiling, with figures of virtues seemingly suspended in air at the corners, and the grisaille allegories and intricate low reliefs in stucco are all reminiscent of Giulio Romano's work in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, particularly the Sala di Psiche. Perhaps Cles had expressed a preference for a room that employed Giulio's decorative idiom and adhered to a widely accepted mode of presenting classical subjects.

Nonetheless, some rooms do reflect Dosso's particular genius, and these too were appreciated by Cles. For example, while certain aspects

of the ceiling decoration of the Stua de la Famea (used as a refectory by close associates of the court) are also Central Italian in general style, the frescoed lunettes and the spandrels between them are more personal inventions. In the lunettes, scenes from Aesop's fables (fig. 34) are set within vast landscapes—gentle and ideal, Felton Gibbons called them⁷⁸—articulated by towns and rivers with splendid open skies above them. Painted moldings give architectural definition to the spandrels, the capitals of which appear to support fragmentary or mutilated antique statues in grisaille. The whole remarkable conception of the Stua de la Famea is a meditation upon the antique, its fables and its artifacts. Andrea Mattioli, the contemporary whose long poem describing the Magno Palazzo is the basis for our knowledge of its decoration, admired the fragmentary statues, noting that Dosso left them incomplete “because he wanted to imitate the antique.”⁷⁹ That Cles singled out the decoration of this room for praise suggests that he appreciated its unique character and perhaps recognized Dosso’s preeminence as a landscape painter.

COMMISSIONS FROM ERCOLE II

When Dosso returned from Trent to Ferrara in late 1532, his great patron, Alfonso I, had less than two years to live. Indeed, the Age of Alfonso can almost be said to have ended in February 1532, when a terrible fire nearly destroyed an entire wing of the Palazzo del Corte, including the room that had been used as a theater—most recently for a production of Ariosto’s *Cassaria* in 1529. (Contemporaries said that this awful event hastened the demise of the great poet, who died in 1533.)⁸⁰ It was about this time that the young Ercole, Lucrezia Borgia’s first son, born in 1508, became a major presence in Ferrarese political and cultural life.

Vasari claimed that Dosso worked little in the last decade of his life, preferring to enjoy the pension he had received from Alfonso. This assertion is contradicted by a good deal of evidence of the artist’s continuing activity; but it is also true that, because of either his failing health or a change in taste at court, Dosso does not seem to



Fig. 33. Dosso Dossi, Ceiling decoration, Camera del Camin Nero. Fresco and stucco. Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trent

have enjoyed quite the same privileged position at Ercole’s court that he had had at Alfonso’s. Ercole increasingly turned to more classicizing artists, including Battista Dossi. Many of them belonged to a younger generation.

Ercole had received a thorough classical education; Alfonso had been determined that his son escape the stigma he had suffered on that score. As a result, Ercole developed a passion for antiquities, including coins.⁸¹ He acquired a reputation as an orator early in life, notably for



Fig. 34. Dosso Dossi, Decoration, Stua de la Famea. Fresco. Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trent



Fig. 35. Battista Dossi, Camillo Filippi, Gerolamo da Carpi, and other artists, Detail of decoration, Sala delle Vigne. Fresco. Villa of Belriguardo, Ferrara

the speech he gave upon being presented to Pope Hadrian VI in Rome in 1522. His marriage in 1528 to Renée of France, daughter of Louis XII, marked a turning point of his life, both because this alliance set a difficult political course for the years ahead and because Renée's conversion to Calvinism provoked grave upheaval at the court in Ferrara. Ercole adopted the device *Patience*—a virtue that he saw as growing from “strength of the soul”—and remarked to Henry II that regarding his wife he considered himself “more patient than Job.”⁸²

On becoming duke in 1534, Ercole II applied himself to the rebuilding of the part of the palace damaged by fire and to completing his father's interrupted projects at the *delizia* Belriguardo. Interestingly, letters show that Ercole turned to Giulio Romano in Mantua for ideas for the palace work. During his visit to Ferrara in 1535, Giulio almost certainly toured Ercole's two favorite villas, Belriguardo and Copparo, and may have made suggestions for their decoration. Ercole's seriousness about architectural projects and his inclination toward

the world of Central Italian art are both suggested by his overtures to Giulio, who was the greatest pupil of Raphael.⁸³

Dosso continued to play an important role in decorating the so-called Camere Nuove di Corte, Ercole's new rooms in the palace adjacent to the Via Coperta and overlooking the large garden in the courtyard. In 1535 Giovan Battista Tristani and Dosso were named overseers of the works for construction and decoration, respectively. By early 1536 the rooms were well enough along to be shown to Isabella d'Este, Ercole's aunt. On the external facade of these rooms Dosso painted in grisaille a cycle representing the Labors of Hercules, one of his most noted works. These frescoes, now lost, are described by Vasari and Serlio, and again at some length (although in a romantic vein) by Baruffaldi in the early eighteenth century.⁸⁴

In subject matter the frescoes exemplify one of the most significant aspects of Ercole's patronage, his near-obsession with his classical namesake. Literally from his birth, when a celebratory medal representing Hercules and the hydra was struck, no opportunity was lost for alluding to the contemporary ruler by way of the classical hero. This practice too had its precedents in the Este court—with Ercole I in particular⁸⁵—but it was taken to new levels by Ercole II. Although he had his agents searching for a variety of antiquities, he was anxious above all to find representations of Hercules. His brother, Cardinal Ippolito II, who himself was amassing a collection of antiquities, nonetheless sent a newly unearthed figure of Hercules to Ercole, knowing the resonance it would have for him. When other Hercules artifacts were found, Ercole debated whether they were appropriate to his principal residence or to one of the *delizie*.⁸⁶ Literary activity followed suit; for instance, in 1557 the poet and humanist G. B. Giraldi Cinzio wrote a poem entitled *Dell' Ercole...* and dedicated it to Ercole II.

It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of the works by Dosso that can be associated with Ercole have Herculean themes. The painting *Hercules and the Pygmies* (cat. no. 40) is a prime example, especially since it has been convincingly proposed that the Hercules is actually

a portrait of the duke. His preoccupation likewise lends weight to the interpretation of the painting often called *Stregoneria* (cat. no. 42) as an Allegory of Hercules, a theory first advanced by Gibbons, although there have been other plausible interpretations.⁸⁷ To the objection that an allegorical portrait showing the duke in an indecorous mode is unlikely, it can be countered that Ercole consciously embraced works of art of various levels of seriousness and importance. As mentioned above, he differentiated between antiquities appropriate for the palace and for a suburban villa, while at the festivities for his wedding, serious theatrical presentations were interspersed with obviously comic *cose contadinesche*, or peasant things.⁸⁸

But Dosso played a minor role in the grand continuing decoration of the villa of Belriguardo. Although numerous documents indicate that he was active in its chapel and elsewhere in the villa in 1536, he was not part of the team that began work there in earnest in 1537. According to an eighteenth-century writer claiming to base his information on a letter contemporaneous with the events, Ercole asked his secretary to have Dosso's old collaborator, Garofalo, and the young Girolamo da Carpi invited to Belriguardo in 1536. Those two are listed in 1537 accounts, along with Battista Dossi, Tommaso da Carpi (Girolamo's father), Camillo Filippi, and three other painters, in connection with an ongoing campaign of decoration. In one of the most significant recent recoveries of art from this period in Ferrara, their work has now been identified in the newly restored Sala delle Vigne, or Room of the Vines (fig. 35).⁸⁹ With its frescoes of caryatids supporting architecture and a landscape opening up beyond, the Sala delle Vigne poignantly recalls Dosso's Sala delle Cariatidi at Pesaro; poignantly because it seems unlikely that Dosso was much involved with this decoration, and because the differences between the two schemes speak eloquently of a shift in taste at the court. At Pesaro the view is of fresh, lively creatures and living vegetation. At Belriguardo the caryatids are like monumental classical sculptures and may have been directly inspired by Giulio Romano during his stay in 1535; they surely reflect the spirit of his work to

a far greater degree than Dosso's. A similar decoration was next carried out at Ercole's other favorite villa, Copparo, where Battista was working in 1542.⁹⁰

Dosso did receive a final commission from the duke, to be carried out in collaboration with Battista, for two paintings, *Saint George and the Dragon* and *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan* (cat. no. 43), both dated 1540. Listed as "extraordinary expenses" in the accounts, these were obviously considered very important works; Battista was even commissioned to provide paintings to hang over them. While their destination is often described as unknown, the record of payment to Battista says that they were "in corte," or in the palace.⁹¹ Since Saint George is the patron saint of Ferrara, the significance of his representation to the duke, and thus the intended location of the paintings in the palace, can readily be understood. The depictions of both saints famously reflect compositions by Raphael: the Saint George a painting sent to the king of England, and the Saint Michael one given to the king of France. Raphael's cartoon for the latter had been sent as a gift to Alfonso I and was in Ferrara. This reliance on existing compositions by Raphael—which by 1540 had become almost canonical—is a further indication of Ercole's deep admiration for Central Italian painting, with in one case the added significance of a model that had belonged to his father. The commission says a good deal about current notions of artistic imitation and, by extension, about the quite sophisticated level of the ideas about painting that were circulating at the court. It is rather ironic that Dosso's last great ducal assignment took him so deeply into a world not really his own.

Dosso's death is marked in a negative sense: his name no longer appears in the ducal registers and account books. Battista continued in his place, moving on to participate in all the duke's decoration projects of the 1540s—at the villa of Copparo, in his personal rooms in the Torre Marchesana of the castle, and in the palace room called the Camera della Patientia, with its elaborate allegorical paintings relating to the duke's personal device. These open a new era in Ferrarese painting; one somewhat distant from the poetic works of Dosso Dossi.

1. Vasari 1568 (1973 ed., vol. 5, p. 97).
2. Gardner 1904, p. 495.
3. Manca 1993, p. 305; for the Sanudo *Diary* entry, p. 312, n. 24.
4. Catalano 1930, p. 470; and see p. 301 for an almost slapstick anecdote describing how Alfonso embarrassed some women during a ball at the palace.
5. Giovio 1553, p. 148.
6. Ibid., pp. 15–16, 151.
7. A. Venturi 1888–89, pp. 352–53.
8. Giovio 1553, p. 16; Solerti 1892, p. 179.
9. Giovio 1553, p. 16.
10. For a lively summary of the affair, see Ballarin 1994–95, p. 25.
11. Campori 1875, p. 49.
12. For an introduction to Alfonso's Lombardo reliefs, see especially Draper in New York 1985–86, pp. 208–9; for their interpretation, see Sheard 1993, pp. 315–57.
13. Shearman 1987, p. 213, for the Equicola quotation; Corradini 1987, p. 163.
14. For the commission to Raphael, see Golzio 1936, p. 53; for Alfonso's attempts to take advantage of the Sack of Rome and for his numismatic collection, see Corradini 1987, p. 164.
15. Translation from Shearman 1987, p. 213.
16. A. Venturi 1928, p. 111. For a documented summary of the incident, see Lucchesi Ragni in Brescia 1991, pp. 89–93.
17. Solerti 1892, p. 171.
18. Ibid., p. 183.
19. Campori 1863, p. 29.
20. For the early building history of the Via Coperta, see Tuohy 1996, pp. 60–62.
21. Goodgal 1978, pp. 164–66, presents the documents for the Studio di Marmo, and suggests that the principal figurative reliefs were located there while some of the ornamental reliefs were installed in the Camerino. The documents for the *fabbrica dei camerini* are discussed in Goodgal 1978, pp. 167–68; Hope 1987, pp. 30ff.
22. The documents are now conveniently brought together in Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 140–52.
23. Goodgal (1978) bases her conclusion on four principal arguments: 1. A group of building documents from 1508–15 link together a chapel, a study (the Studio di Marmo), a gallery, and a *camarin*. The chapel is said to be near the duke's rooms "sopra la Via Coperta," that is, either above or (as Goodgal prefers) near the Via Coperta; she believes that the dimensions given in the documents for the studio correspond well to those of the south side of the ravelin. 2. In Titian's letter of April 23, 1518, sent through Alfonso's agent in Venice, Tebaldo, the artist asks for further clarification of the placement of paintings within a room he has clearly already seen. Goodgal believes that this rules out the area of the *fabbrica dei camerini* in the Via Coperta, since those rooms were under renovation, if not indeed rebuilding, in 1518–19. 3. When Ferrara devolved to the papacy in 1598, the Castello was divided between Cesare d'Este and the Apostolic See, according to the Convenzione Faentina. The dividing line gave the papacy the castle and its moats, while the palace continued to be Este property; but "precious belongings" anywhere were still the property of Cesare, and the contents of the Camerino were certainly to be numbered among them. However, when Cesare's agent tried to collect the paintings he was prevented from doing so by Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, the pope's representative, who refused to hand over the keys. As is well known, when the rooms were finally visited the paintings were gone. Goodgal's argument is that since the papacy controlled the keys to this room, it must have been on their side of the divide. 4. The Aeneas frieze does not appear in the various inventories of Este possessions in the palace—in which the Dosso ceiling tondo from the Via Coperta (cat. no. 32), for example, was noted—and thus, says Goodgal, was not in Este rooms. Goodgal concludes from these four points and some other minor considerations that the famous Bacchanals and the Aeneas frieze were taken from a room above the moat in the ravelin.
24. Hope 1987, p. 36. The description, dated November 15, 1598, was written by the Modenese Giovanni Battista Spaccini. Additional objections to Goodgal's arguments that have occurred to this author and to others are put forth in, or reasoned from, Hope 1987: 1. In letters and surveys of 1598, a group of rooms are called the *camerini d'alabastro* (this first use of the term, later to become the norm, was probably a reference to Antonio Lombardo's marble reliefs), and the room described in a report from Roncaglia to Cesare is called the "Pº [primo] Camerino d'alabastro." These rooms described by the surveyors are clearly in the Via Coperta, and it is unlikely that they would have used the same language to describe rooms above the moat. Goodgal's argument that they did just that in order to indicate a similarity between the two groups of rooms is not convincing. 2. A 1505 document about Alfonso's renovations of the Via Coperta—which, it should be remembered, was specifically the passageway between the two buildings—calls the rooms in question *fabbriche sopra la via coperta*. The word *sopra* is used not to signify "nearby," but rather "above." Another document from this building campaign specifically says *le stantie se fate in la via coperta*, the rooms built in the Via Coperta. 3. Titian, in his letter, is discussing a room that he has seen in some form, but perhaps before the extensive remodeling. 4. Goodgal, in interpreting the difficulty of obtaining keys to the Camerino from the pope's representatives, incorrectly concludes that the room itself was in an area outside Cesare d'Este's jurisdiction, but "This argument depends on the assumption that after the departure of Cesare d'Este his agents retained day-to-day control of the palace and had full access to it. But this was certainly not the case" (Hope 1987, p. 34). 5. The 1598 "inventory," which does not include the Aeneas frieze, is not a true inventory but a list of works that "Cesare was not intending to take with him to Modena" (ibid., p. 36) and was prepared to sell instead.
25. Vasari 1568 (1973 ed., vol. 7, pp. 433–35), in his Life of Titian, writes that the room begun by Alfonso in 1514 included certain *spartimenti* (compartments) by Dosso of the story of Aeneas, followed by Mars and Venus and a grotto with Vulcan; then a work by Giovanni Bellini; then two works by Titian (he does not mention the *Bacchus and Ariadne*). He discusses the room again briefly

- in the Life of Girolamo da Carpi (Vasari 1568 [1973 ed., vol. 6, p. 474]), mentioning Dosso's "Bacchanal of men." Five paintings that had been seen hanging in the room are described in a report from Annibale Roncaglia to Cesare d'Este, informing Cesare that by December 1, 1598, the paintings had been taken away; see A. Venturi 1882, p. 113.
26. Shearman 1987, p. 213, where the letter was first firmly associated with the Camerino.
27. Solerti 1892, pp. 168–69.
28. Shearman 1987, p. 212.
29. The negotiations with Raphael are discussed in Shearman 1987.
30. Although Pellegrino left the employment of the Este court in 1513 and returned to his native Friuli, where he was employed in numerous projects throughout the rest of the decade (Tempestini 1979, pp. 96–99), it is more than likely that he maintained his contacts in Ferrara and could have "colored" Raphael's *modello* in 1517. See Shearman 1987, pp. 211–12, 218; Pacciani 1989, pp. 303, 313–14, n. 1; Agostini and Stanzani 1996, p. 26.
31. Alfonso did not give up on amassing works of art by the greatest artists of his age. In 1523 he attempted to buy various manuscripts and drawings by Leonardo from Francesco Melzi, while in 1529, when Michelangelo was warmly received in Ferrara during the brief, tense period of the Florentine Republic, Alfonso asked him for a drawing of Florence. Michelangelo promised to send something much better, the famous *Leda* (now lost). But Michelangelo was put off by the person sent to collect it and gave the work to his student Mini instead; then, both the painting and its cartoon found their way to France. For both artists, see Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 144, 151; on the Michelangelo, see Ballarin 1994–95, p. 26.
32. The letters written by Titian and Tebaldi were first published in Campori 1875; they are discussed at length by all the authors writing on the Camerino.
33. Titian was in Ferrara in mid- and late 1524 and again in 1525, when he probably delivered the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*. At that time he was also paid for ultramarine pigment he had purchased, which may have been used either to complete his own painting or for the repainting of the landscape. Another possibility is that he repainted the Bellini in 1529, when he had another long stay in the city. For the earlier payments to the artist, see Hope 1987, pp. 26, 39–40, nn. 12, 13; for 1529 payments, see Campori 1875, p. 19.
34. Bull 1990, p. 15, and D. A. Brown 1993, pp. 294–97.
35. The Aldobrandini inventory citations are conveniently listed by Camiz in Ferrara 1983, p. 85. For a discussion of the provenance of the Castel Sant'Angelo *Bath*, and the suggestion, first made by Longhi, that it came from Alfonso's Camerino, see cat. no. 55. The provenance of the *Allegory of Music* is discussed in cat. no. 25, but clearly it too does not fit the descriptions in the Aldobrandini inventories. Mattaliano 1993, pp. 359ff., and Eidelberg and Rowlands 1994, pp. 250–51, have shown that the National Gallery *Bacchanal* was in the collection of Roberto Canonici in Ferrara by 1632, when it appeared in his inventory, and by 1665 had passed into the Gonzaga collection in Mantua. This early provenance makes it unlikely that it originally came from Duke Alfonso's Camerino.
36. This rare subject was known to the writer Vincenzo Cartari and appears in the chapter concerning Vulcan in his *Imagini . . . delli dei de gli'antichi* (Cartari, 1556).
37. Shearman 1987, p. 216.
38. For a review of past interpretations of the paintings and very interesting, if not altogether convincing, new suggestions, see Colantuono 1991, pp. 237–56, especially pp. 244–48, on the young Bacchus and pp. 251–52, on marriage imagery.
39. Holberton 1986, pp. 347–50.
40. Shearman 1992, pp. 255–56; Sheard 1993, pp. 327–28.
41. Shearman 1992, pp. 256–58.
42. Campori 1875, p. 6, as translated in Colantuono 1991, p. 239.
43. For the suggestion that this detail was added by Dosso to allude to the Schifanoia fresco, see Buzzoni 1985, pp. 97–105. However, D. A. Brown 1993, pp. 291–92, states unequivocally that the gesture was painted in that way by Bellini.
44. This theme has been examined in detail by Marek in Ferrara 1983, pp. 77–83, and Marek 1985, pp. 38–75, followed by Sheard 1993, especially pp. 323ff. and p. 338, n. 3. For Alfonso's biographer, Pistofilo, see Cappelli 1865, p. 491; Giraldi and Equicola are discussed by Battisti 1960, pp. 143–44.
45. See, for example, A. Venturi 1892–93, pp. 49–51.
46. Campori 1875, p. 9; A. Venturi 1928, pp. 108–10.
47. A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 53.
48. Sheard 1993, pp. 315–22. For the quotation from Catullus, see Holberton 1986, p. 348.
49. See the excellent essay by Camiz in Ferrara 1983.
50. For the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, see Lowinsky 1982; for the canons in Dosso's *Allegory of Music*, see cat. no. 25 and Slim 1990, pp. 43–98.
51. As suggested by Sheard 1993, p. 327.
52. Luzio 1913, p. 218.
53. For these, see the many publications by A. Venturi; Mezzetti 1965a; and now, Ballarin 1994–95.
54. Tuohy 1996, p. 100.
55. Catalano 1930, p. 466, and n. 11.
56. Schulz 1987, pp. 120–21, 228, n. 54.
57. Gardner 1904, pp. 215–16; see as well Catalano 1930, pp. 118ff.
58. Tuohy 1996, pp. 117–21.
59. The original set for *Cassaria* is discussed in Catalano 1930, p. 302. Raphael (or someone in his workshop) designed sets for Ariosto's comedy *I suppositi* when it was performed in Rome in 1519. Frommel in Rome 1984, cat. no. 2.11.1, pp. 225–28, suggests that a drawing in the Uffizi (no. 560 Ar242 Ar) is by Raphael and may be the design for this set, but Pacciani 1989, p. 303, writes that Giulio Romano was the designer. It is often

- stated that this set was described in a letter to the duke as a cityscape of Ferrara “de perspective,” but Frommel, repeating a correction made by Shearman, reports that the text has been wrongly transcribed and does not give the name of the city.
60. See Benzoni 1993, p. 110, for information about the festivities.
 61. The documents for this commission, beginning with the 1532 granting of patronal rights to Alfonso for the construction of a new chapel in the cathedral at Modena and documenting its subsequent decoration, are in Campori 1880, pp. 83–88. For additional information, especially on the painting originally in Reggio Emilia, see Monducci 1985, pp. 252–53.
 62. Milan 1991.
 63. Gundersheimer 1972, pp. 67–72, especially pp. 70–71, for the frescoes of Eleonora.
 64. See Zaniboni 1987, pp. 36–40.
 65. Pacciani 1985, p. 143 and n. 55.
 66. Santi in Reggio Emilia 1994, p. 227; Giovio 1553, p. 149. For Calcagnini, see Catalano 1930, p. 196; Giovio 1597, p. 153. For Paul III’s visit, see Equicola “Annali” (1542).
 67. Giovio’s characterization of Dosso’s paintings appears at the end of his brief *Life of Raphael*, published in Latin and Italian in Barocchi 1971, p. 18. The relevant phrase in Italian is: “Battendo infatti con assaporata delizia i vaghi sentieri della pittura, si è dato a ritrarre con mano profusa e gioiosa rupi scoscese, boschi verdegianti . . .” The English translation is from Gombrich 1953, p. 346.
 68. English translation from Ariosto 1974, p. 5.
 69. As suggested by Dempsey 1968, p. 267, n. 4, and explored in much greater detail by Giancarlo Fiorenza in his forthcoming dissertation on Dosso’s approach to mythology; see Fiorenza forthcoming.
 70. Camiz in Ferrara 1983, p. 90; on Laura Danti, see Righini 1964.
 71. Vasari 1568 (1973 ed., vol. 6, p. 319; vol. 5, pp. 99–100); see Smyth 1998, pp. 241–62 and especially pp. 252–54, for a hypothesis about which frescoes may have been destroyed.
 72. P. Dal Poggetto in Urbino 1983, pp. 381–97, especially pp. 381, 383.
 73. On the frescoes in Trent, see especially Puppi 1964, pp. 19–36; Chini and De Gramatica 1985 (and with earlier bibliography); Frangenberg 1993a, pp. 352–78, and Frangenberg 1993b, pp. 18–37; also see Nova 1994b, pp. 270–86, for Romanino’s contribution.
 74. Puppi 1964, p. 22.
 75. De Gramatica in Trent 1985–86, p. 145.
 76. As in Frangenberg 1993b, p. 22.
 77. For this complex issue, see Nova 1994a.
 78. Gibbons 1968, p. 55.
 79. De Gramatica in Trent 1985–86, p. 176.
 80. Equicola “Annali” (1533).
 81. Celio Calcagnini catalogued his coin collection in a manuscript entitled “Aureorum Numismatum Illustrissimi Herculis secundi, Ducis Ferrariae quarti, Elenchus,” published in *Documenti inediti* 1879, pp. 100–155. Another interesting example of Ercole’s enthusiasm for antiquities is his keenness to obtain objects uncovered during the excavation of new fortifications in Modena, which was ordered by the duke himself in 1546–48. See Corradini 1987, p. 167.
 82. Benzoni 1993, p. 118.
 83. It should be remembered that Sebastiano Serlio dedicated the first edition of his treatise on architecture, *Regole generali di architettura* (Venice, 1537), to Ercole II. For a discussion of Giulio’s trip to Ferrara that is revelatory about his possible importance there, see Pacciani 1989.
 84. Vasari 1568 (1973 ed., vol. 5, p. 98), Serlio as in Bentini 1995–96, pp. 13–14, Baruffaldi 1697–1722 (1844–46 ed., vol. 1, pp. 255ff.).
 85. Sheard 1993, pp. 323–24.
 86. Corradini 1987, pp. 165–67.
 87. See Gibbons 1965. For further discussion of this painting as comedic, see cat. no. 40.
 88. Benzoni 1993, p. 110.
 89. Bentini 1995–96, pp. 9–37.
 90. Ibid., pp. 36–37.
 91. A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 132, no. CCXLIII.

The Technique of Dosso Dossi

POETRY WITH PAINT

ANDREA ROTHE AND DAWSON W. CARR

Dosso Dossi embarked on his career at a time of momentous change in the way painters practiced their art. During the years around 1500, the most advanced artists in Venice were creating a new method of oil painting that had begun to lead to fundamental transformations of the creative process. The heady atmosphere of innovation challenged the young Dosso, who embraced the new practices and became a pioneer in the expressive use of oil paint.

In this essay, our intention is to present a preliminary overview of Dosso's method of painting—preliminary because this fascinating aspect of his art has only begun to be explored, and much remains to be learned. Our observations were gleaned principally from the examination of a large number of paintings; the findings are recorded in the technical observations by Andrea Rothe that accompany the catalogue entries. While inevitably the emphasis is on Dosso, some paintings usually ascribed to Battista Dossi were included as well in the hope of discerning differences in technique that might help us separate the two artists' hands. Close visual study of the original paintings was augmented by the use of x-radiography, infrared reflectography, some scientific analysis, and macrophotography to study brushwork, fingerprints, cloth imprints, and other details.¹

DOSSO AND OIL PAINTING

Perhaps more than any other factor, the development of oil painting enabled Dosso's particular creative genius to find expression. In North Italy, oil had only recently supplanted tempera as the primary medium for making paint, and to fully understand Dosso's achieve-

ment we should briefly examine that evolution. While Vasari's history of oil painting names Jan van Eyck as its inventor and Antonello da Messina as its importer to Venice,² the use of oil for painting actually had a much more complicated and circuitous development. From earlier accounts and artists' recipe books, as well as modern scientific analytical methods, it has become clear that in much of Europe, including Italy, oil had been in use many years before, although mostly in conjunction with tempera. Tempera's egg medium was not well suited for making glazes, so painters sometimes used oil to make a translucent glaze that they brushed over a foundation of opaque tempera color. Oil's natural translucency enabled painters to lay on veils of color for modeling or to tone the color beneath to create a different color.

Later on, oil was sometimes mixed directly with tempera when the paint was made. Scientific media analysis has shown, for instance, that painters in Ferrara were using this kind of emulsion by at least 1460.³ Likewise, even long after oil had become the favored medium, egg and glue tempera were sometimes combined with it. While some practices were uniformly adopted, painters were individuals and found their own personal solutions to use in creating certain visual effects.

But while painters had long employed oil along with tempera, it was not until the mid-1470s that some painters in Venice, Antonello da Messina and Giovanni Bellini among them, began to favor oil as their primary medium.⁴ Its use had become common in the Netherlands a half century earlier; oil paintings imported from the Netherlands no doubt served as an inspiration for Italian artists. Ferrarese painters would have known a triptych by Rogier van der Weyden

that was the pride of the Este collection at Belriguardo, and Rogier himself may have visited Ferrara on his way to Rome.

Vasari treated oil as a “discovery” because of the extraordinary results obtained when painters learned to use it on its own. He wrote, “The oil in itself softens and sweetens the colours and renders them more delicate and more easily blended than do the other mediums. While the work is wet the colours readily mix and unite one with the other; in short, by this method the artists impart wonderful grace and vivacity and vigour to their figures, so much so that these often seem to us in relief and ready to issue forth from the panel.”⁵ While Vasari stressed oil’s blendability and its role in modeling the figure, Venetian artists clearly also valued the medium for its intrinsic luminous quality. The art of Bellini and Antonello showed that the oil medium could achieve greater depth and luminosity of color, as well as softer tonal transitions, than had ever been possible with tempera.

While Bellini and Antonello made the most of oil’s translucency, their working methods remained basically those of the tempera painter. To create a smooth, absorbent ground, gesso (a plasterlike substance) was mixed with animal glue and applied to the surface to be painted. Then, in a preparatory drawing stage, the position of every form was worked out before painting began. Infrared reflectography has revealed that Bellini and members of his shop habitually made numerous drawings on the gesso in charcoal and other media. Then paint was applied to the white ground in thin layers, mostly staying within the preestablished contours. The paint was laid on according to the old color canon, from the lightest tone to the darkest. Therefore the densest parts were the areas with the darkest glazes, although even these were relatively flat and uniform. The surfaces of Dosso’s pictures, in contrast, are generally quite varied, thick, and heavily worked up, as visitors to the exhibition will observe. Indeed, his technique of painting corresponds to the next stage in the development of oil as a medium, in which its potentials for opacity and malleability were exploited along with its translucency.

In Venice, painting was revolutionized about

1500 by Giorgione, who not only created a new kind of subject matter but also devised a new way to present it with unprecedented immediacy. His technique particularly lent itself to evoking the play of light across forms. But while Giorgione’s methods served his acute observation of the natural world, they also fostered the poetic quality of his commentary on nature. Reversing Bellini’s system of applying paint in transparent, increasingly darker layers, Giorgione began with a dark ground and worked toward lighter values, mostly with opaque paint. Light emerges from dark, and the highlights become the thickest parts of the painting. By combining the use of opaque paint with glazes, Giorgione achieved an extraordinary tonal range of which perhaps the most notable aspect is the variety of greens in his landscapes.

DOSSO’S MATERIALS

Unlike most oils used in cooking, those practical for painting have the property of drying. Scientific media analyses have shown that Dosso used at least two types of oil. In most paintings he employed the oil derived from walnuts, which does not turn quite as yellow as linseed oil.⁶ This was a trade-off, however, because walnut oil does not dry to as hard a state as linseed oil, and this may be one reason why so many of Dosso’s paintings have suffered from cleanings in the past. The large number of shrinkage cracks on Dosso’s paintings might also result from the use of a slow-drying oil like walnut. Recent analysis of the medium of *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38) indicates that Dosso also used linseed oil.⁷ Unfortunately we do not know why he chose to work with more than one kind of oil. Perhaps he distinguished differences in handling that he wanted to exploit for purposes that we do not perceive today.

During Dosso’s formative years, hand in hand with the development of oil as a painting medium, another important change occurred in the materials of art. Artists in Venice and much of North Italy began to abandon wood and instead adopt canvas as the principal surface on which to paint. Although poplar, the wood most used for panels in Italy, was plentiful, canvas was

cheaper, lighter, and more practical because, unlike wood, it did not warp and split and was not subject to wood-boring beetles.

Dosso and Battista used both wood and cloth as painting supports. Small devotional works and large altarpieces, those most traditional of painted images, tended to be executed on wood, probably reflecting market demand and the preferences of patrons more than any creative choice by the artist. But canvas was used more and more by Dosso and Battista in the course of their careers, as it was in the region generally. The brothers seem to have valued the fabric largely for its practicality; they never exploited its texture for expressive purposes, as later Venetian painters would do. Nor do they seem to have favored a particular type of canvas, since they used a variety of grades according to no discernible system.⁸

Looms at that time could not produce canvas wider than about 40 inches,⁹ so for the larger paintings, pieces were commonly sewn together. It has been observed that in some of Dosso's works, including the *Allegory with Pan* and *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* (cat. no. 27), the seams were not stitched but were instead butt-joined (*giuntura a testata*). To make this kind of join, the selvages of the two pieces of canvas were overlapped and cut with a sharp knife; then the two new edges were butted against each other, and a strip of fine canvas was glued on top to hold them together. Another strip could be glued on the back to assure an even tension. The purpose of this procedure was to avoid the disturbing bulge that is created by sewing a seam and is especially noticeable along horizontal seams (for instance, in the *Allegory of Fortune*, cat. no. 41).

COMPOSITION

Giorgione's innovations influenced Dosso in ways that went far beyond the use of oil paint on canvas. Perhaps most fundamental was the Venetian's introduction of a newly direct approach to the creative process. X-radiography has confirmed what Vasari pointed out in the sixteenth century: Giorgione evolved his compositions on the painting's surface without necessarily establishing a fixed scheme in drawings

beforehand.¹⁰ For Vasari and most Central Italian artists, this approach went against the basic principle that art was founded on drawing. They held that excellence in painting depended on careful development of the design from the rough sketch to the cartoon, which was used to transfer the final arrangement to the surface to be painted.

Drawings associated with Dosso's pictures are of several types. Quick sketches have been found on the backs of a number of his paintings. Those on the Modena altarpiece are discussed by Jadranka Bentini below. In addition, on the reverse of the *Apollo*, a charming figure of a man was discovered (fig. 80).¹¹ And when the *Allegory of Fortune* was relined in 1990, the faint image of a face was found on the back along with a drawing of a chalice on a plate (fig. 36), both executed in a dark brown paint so liquid that it easily dripped. These sketches are not clearly tied to painted compositions; they may represent nothing more than doodles.

Attempts to attribute drawings on paper to Dosso have never met with acceptance. This does not mean that Dosso did not make drawings, only that none are preserved or recognized, perhaps because he considered them merely preliminary and destroyed them. Nonetheless, it would seem that he did not usually prepare his compositions in this deliberate way; no indica-



Fig. 36. Reverse of *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41), showing drawing of a chalice on a plate

tion of squaring, pouncing, incision, or any other means used to transfer a design from drawings to a support has been noted in Dosso's oeuvre. Nor has infrared reflectography of Dosso's works revealed the kind of extensive underdrawing that Bellini used habitually and that Giorgione practiced as well.

Even though it seems that Dosso did not usually set his ideas down on the gesso in pencil or charcoal, we now know that he sometimes began his paintings by sketching directly onto the unprimed canvas with his brush. These drawings were made with very liquid paint, which bled through the fabric and was visible on the back. Unfortunately, the backs of these sketches are now usually covered with a lining canvas applied to reinforce the original canvas when it became weak or brittle. When the lining of *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* was replaced in 1952, there was revealed on the back of the original canvas a remarkable reversed image of the figures in the painting (fig. 78). Dosso had used a liquid dark brown or black paint to sketch out his composition on the front of the raw canvas, apparently quite quickly. Comparison of the drawing with the finished painting shows that the figures of Jupiter and Mercury were fully established at this stage and that only minor adjustments were made to them in the painting process. However, the x-radiograph (fig. 79) reveals that Dosso struggled with the pose of Virtue, particularly the legs; he added the drapery over the legs during the painting process and changed his mind about the folds at least once. To make this painting, Dosso perhaps developed the composition somewhat in drawings on paper and then tried it at full scale on the raw canvas before applying the gesso and beginning to paint.

Sketches done directly on the canvas would be covered by the gesso layer, so Dosso sometimes chose to make his sketch after he had applied the gesso and a dark gray preparatory layer, or imprimatura. These sketches are easy to make out in x-radiographs because Dosso worked in white lead paint over the dark imprimatura; he used this method, for instance, in *Melissa* (cat. no. 12; fig. 58) and the *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25; fig. 75). With the latter especially, the x-radiograph reveals the broad,



Fig. 37. X-radiograph of *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25; detail), showing a sketch that lays out the first idea for the head and shoulders of the central female figure, painted in lead white over a dark imprimatura

sweeping way Dosso set out his initial ideas. This extraordinary freedom is most apparent where the figures as painted do not correspond exactly to the earliest conception, so the white lead strokes are very noticeable.

Thus, Dosso sketched ideas quickly, then often altered them in the process of working out his compositions. Indeed, x-radiographs have revealed that rethinking was the rule rather than the exception in Dosso's art. While some changes represent nothing more than his probing for the perfect pose or expression, he also characteristically made more radical alterations, often changing his mind after working up compositional elements to a rather complete state. The thickness of Dosso's paint results not only from his adoption of Giorgione's manner but also from the fact that layer upon layer of paint was built up as he developed his paintings.

The major alterations discovered in Dosso's compositions are briefly described in the technical observations in this catalogue, but determining the reasons for those changes is both difficult and problematic. It is important to be

particularly careful when interpreting the data gleaned from x-radiographs of Dosso's works because it seems that in some cases he recycled canvases; that is, he abandoned a composition and used the canvas for a completely different purpose. For instance, beneath the *Allegory of Fortune* is another composition with a landscape; in the x-radiograph, Dosso's distinctive trees and figures of quite different scale can be seen (fig. 92). Unfortunately, it has not been possible to isolate the earlier composition and thus determine its subject, but it is difficult to imagine how the composition visible on the surface could have evolved from the one underneath. To compound matters, a curtain that appears at the upper left in the x-radiograph was painted over the landscape and might have belonged to either the first design or an abandoned version of the final picture, or even to an interim composition with yet another theme.

Sometimes Dosso added and subtracted figures and other elements for what seem like purely pictorial reasons as he developed a composition. For instance, the x-radiograph of the Borghese *Virgin and Child* (cat. no. 18) reveals that Dosso first conceived the painting as a Holy Family, sketching in the figure of the Joseph at right. While omitting Joseph changed the painting's subject, the principal motive was to focus the composition. In a similar vein, cherubs or putti, like the ones in the Modena altarpiece (fig. 1) and the *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38), were often fully worked up as complete figures, and then the clouds were painted over them as the artist deemed appropriate. In other instances, however, the changes represent major shifts in conception, as for example in *Melissa*, where a knight was fully painted in only to be replaced by a dog, whose implications Anna Coliva discusses fully below.

In the *Allegory with Pan*, examination of the paint layers reveals a quite complex sequence of execution. The earliest part of the work is the standing woman, who once held the viola da gamba visible in the x-radiograph, and the sleeping nude. Subsequently the standing woman and her viola were overpainted with the landscape (the standing woman was later revealed, presumably by a nineteenth-century "restorer"

who removed the landscape that Dosso had painted over her). The old woman was perhaps added at that time and the nude was reworked, with new locks painted over her original hair. In the very last phase the figure of Pan, much less precisely defined than the other figures, was painted (see figs. 86–88). In the catalogue entry, Peter Humfrey summarizes the numerous scholarly proposals attempting to identify the subject of this painting, none of which has ever won general approval. Although perhaps Dosso's "text" has simply not yet been discovered, his varied treatments of the scene seem rather to imply that his subject was changed or considerably altered in the process of painting.

Following Giorgione's lead, Dosso became one of the first painters to work compositions out directly on the canvas, proceeding somewhat intuitively and with a sense of improvisation. Indeed, as he adds and subtracts figures Dosso seems, even with regard to the narrative content, to be creating his magical scenes as he goes along. This is perhaps one reason why Dosso's pictures are so difficult to decipher. When the first x-radiographs of Giorgione's *Tempest* (fig. 3) demonstrated that he had significantly altered the composition, some historians drew the conclusion that he had painted a picture without a subject.¹² Others held that the artist was merely refining his composition as it developed. Were Giorgione and Dosso trying to create enigmatic scenes, deliberately seeking mystery to expand the possible avenues of interpretation? Present analytical techniques have not yielded a definitive answer to this question, but indisputably these artists developed a new approach to pictorial composition, probing for their evocative scenes directly on the canvas.

Although Vasari and other contemporaneous writers suggest that Dosso and Battista did not get along, the brothers shared a common background and worked side by side; thus it is not surprising that their techniques are rather similar, and reworking is common in paintings attributed to both. But one major technical difference that emerges reveals quite distinct temperaments. Dosso, it seems, agonized over his ideas and was rarely satisfied, at times even abandoning previous schemes, as we have observed. Battista, who

made far fewer changes, gives the impression of being less probing and less discerning. (However, many more of his works as well as pictures attributed to the workshop need to undergo technical analysis before this assessment can be confirmed.)

PREPARATION

Richness, depth, and luminosity of color characterize the work of both Dosso and Battista. These qualities are partly due to the particular combination of preparatory layers the Dossi put on the surface before applying paint. It has already been noted that Dosso often used a thin colored layer, known as an imprimatura, on top of the gesso. In paintings by the Dossi this was dark gray, the color that they seem to have consistently preferred as a base.¹³ The particular gray favored was achieved by mixing lead white, charcoal, some form of brown earth, and possibly clay.¹⁴ An imprimatura was generally made by blending the desired pigments with a glue binder; Dosso, however, as is mentioned by Vasari and Giovanni Battista Armenini, used oil as a binder,¹⁵ a kind of preparation that has not been consistently noted in the work of other artists of Dosso's era. The Dossi perhaps also favored it because it created a slick surface that prevented the gesso from absorbing the oil, thus maintaining the saturated richness of the colors.

To expand the range of color brilliance and the variety of light effects, the Dossi used colored underpaint over the imprimatura in certain areas. Dark gray-blue is found under the sky in both the *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38) and the Borghese *Apollo* (cat. no. 28).¹⁶ A purer blue was used beneath trees and landscape, while yellow (most probably lead-tin yellow) often formed the base for green garments, and white (lead white) was used under blue and red garments for particular brilliancy.

To achieve dramatic contrast between the zones of heaven and earth as depicted in an altarpiece, the dark imprimatura was sometimes used only in the lower section. In Dosso's Modena altarpiece (fig. 1), for example, the three large figures and the landscape are painted over a dark preparation, while the apparition of the Virgin and Child above is executed over a light-

colored or white ground; as a result, the heavenly realm is suffused with intense light that emphasizes its visionary nature. Many other paintings by the Dossi utilize this two-zone effect, including Battista's *Madonna with Saints and a Confraternity* (Galleria Estense, Modena) and *Saint Michael* (Galleria Nazionale, Parma).

HANDLING OF THE PAINT

Once the basic design had been established and the imprimatura laid on, Dosso began to paint. From the example of Giorgione he had learned to create form directly out of color, and he realized that varying the consistency of the paint and applying it unevenly greatly expanded the expressive possibilities of the medium. This is the moment when brushwork truly became a vehicle for creative expression. Whether defining a figure in space or evoking the play of light across a landscape, Dosso's sentient touches of the brush are everywhere manifest.

Giorgione discovered, and Dosso learned, that broken brushwork was especially important at the edges of the objects depicted. For the first time painters sought to unify the figure with the ambient air and create a sense of optical reality. Even Vasari, who found their methods alien, marveled at these artists' achievement.

Remarkably, Dosso was in command of this technique from an early moment in his career. His tendency to blend out the contours in order to avoid sharp contrasts is already evident with the figure of Saint George in the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6). The painting of the saint's face represents Dosso at his most Giorgionesque, but the feathery brushwork of the body contours exceeds any we know from Giorgione's hand. Although the outlines of Dosso's figures are not consistently so feathery, he always softens them in some manner; see, for instance, the arm of the male figure in the *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41), with its undulating line. This kind of contour is seen not only in large-scale paintings but also in small devotional works, such as the Borghese *Virgin and Child*. Dosso's deft brush seems able with a few strokes to create meaningful, plastic form.

As he developed as a painter, Dosso learned

to use the brush more and more expressively, tailoring his application to the requirements at hand. For instance, when painting the string held by the bearded foreground figure in the Uffizi *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42), he modulated the brushstroke from thick to barely visible, evoking the shifting light reflected by a vibrating filament. Some large figure paintings, such as the series of Learned Men of Classical Antiquity (cat. no. 22) or *Saints Cosmas and Damian* (cat. no. 23), display broad, emphatic brushwork in keeping with the boldness of the poses. Note how the facial features of the saints are painted *alla prima* directly onto the flesh-colored paint. Dosso draws with his brush and manages to achieve the intense expressions with the greatest economy of means, each stroke perfectly applied to achieve the desired expression.

The boldest brushwork of both Dosso and Battista appears in their landscapes. The technique employed can be termed impressionistic because it so vividly evokes its effects. The paint was seemingly applied with great rapidity, in a rhythmic display of virtuosity (fig. 38). While these strokes are palpable when viewed close up, from farther back they blend to evoke a distant view in which the heavy intervening air has muted the forms but intensified the colors.

In the cityscapes, the main forms of the buildings are often laid down in broad patches. Over that, form is defined with opaque paint applied in linear, mostly vertical brushstrokes that highlight, model, and ornament the structures (fig. 59). Elsewhere form is defined by paint dabbed on or scumbled across the surface, always exhibiting the artist's sure hand in the modulation of tone. The vision of the world presented is quite an original one, especially when compared with Titian's more understated response to Giorgione's example.

It has long been noted that the painting of the landscape in Raphael's *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 39) is quite distinct from Raphael's usual landscape style and closely resembles that of Dosso and Battista.¹⁷ This is particularly true for the depiction of structures, which are created with broad patches of color overlaid by vertical brushwork, but also extends to the stippling of trees and the painting of a rainbow; all are very

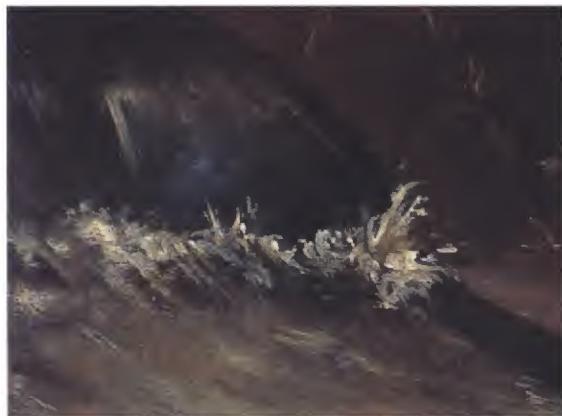


Fig. 38. Detail of the waterfall at the lower left in *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 36)

close to work by the Dossi. Did Raphael create this manner of landscape painting for the *Madonna of Foligno* and then abandon it? Or, perhaps, did one of the Dossi paint the landscape as a talented assistant in Raphael's shop? Did Raphael influence Dosso and his school, or did they influence him? Or is the similarity of their styles merely coincidental? Perhaps more advanced analytical techniques will help answer this question; as far as technique alone is



Fig. 39. Detail of background architecture in Raphael's *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 4)



Fig. 40. Apollo's eye; detail of *Apollo* (cat. no. 28)



Fig. 41. Fringe of a headdress showing sharp impasto details; detail of *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38)

concerned, it seems quite plausible that Dosso or Battista painted this renowned landscape.¹⁸

A paradoxical aspect of Dosso's style is his meticulous rendering of small details in works that are otherwise broadly painted. He tended in particular to dwell on facial hair, such as beards, eyelashes, and eyebrows (fig. 40). The nails on fingers and toes are always well observed and clearly modeled in the preliminary design visible in the x-radiograph.

When painting decorative elements such as tassels, ribbons, and borders, Dosso often used an especially full-bodied paint that could retain its shape on the surface of the support. This impasto is frequently seen in highlights, which are sharp and stand out in relief, and is also used for linear details, like the fringe on the old woman's headdress in the *Allegory with Pan* (fig. 41) and the border of the red cape worn by the young man in the *Allegory of Fortune*. Here Dosso's application of paint recalls that of an embroiderer or a jeweler laying on filigree, but done with a vivid sense of the actual visual impression: the forms are not pedantically defined in full, but varied as if light were being reflected. Some halos and most jewelry are also executed in impasto, with a relief created in paint that catches the light for added shimmer. The medium that gave the paint body was probably made by mixing egg with the oil to create an emulsion.¹⁹ Paint with this medium has the advantage of drying faster, enabling artists to build up crisp paint layers without having to wait through long periods of drying.

The oil-egg emulsion could also be used to

create the effect of "beading," a method widely used by artists in Northern Italy. Dosso perhaps added some water to the paint applied on top, which would have made it slide on the underlying oily paint layer, creating highlights such as those on the tufts of fur on the garment of the figure behind Hercules and the hairs of the little white dog (fig. 42) in the Uffizi *Allegory of Hercules*.

The pigments most commonly used by Dosso and Battista were those employed by many Venetian painters of the era.²⁰ Indeed, the Dossi procured their pigments from Venice, which was home to the best color merchants in Europe. Apart from the common lead white, earth colors, and blacks, the pigments most used by Dosso include azurite, occasionally costly ultramarine, the red lakes, vermillion, and lead-tin yellow. The Dossi also had a predilection for orpiment, a very poisonous yellow derived from arsenic.²¹ Orpiment contains natural impurities of realgar, which impart the rich orange-yellow color that so appealed to contemporary Venetian painters, including Titian.

Paintings of the school of Ferrara in general and those of the Dossi in particular are distinguished by the remarkably well-preserved, intense greens they display. Green was problematic for painters of this period; contemporary treatises warn of the unstable nature of some greens, particularly copper resinate and verdigris,²² which were known to turn brown. Yet those colors were indispensable to the oil painter because they produced rich, dark greens unlike those yielded by any other pigments, and



Fig. 42. White dog fur, painted in oil-egg emulsion that creates an effect of "beading"; detail of *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42)

Dosso most probably used both to enrich and vary the hue, particularly in his landscapes.

Sometimes it is difficult to establish whether the beautiful transparent copper resinate green was used, because it turns brown quite readily and is so fragile that it rarely survives cleaning. As for verdigris, the pigment was often used by both brothers, as has become quite clear from examining the paint layers of their works. Recent scientific analyses have shown that when properly applied, greens made with verdigris are much more stable than was previously thought.²³

Sixteenth-century painters prepared verdigris (a basic copper acetate pigment) and mixed it with heated *vernice comune*, literally "plain varnish," probably a solution of resins in linseed or walnut oil. This produced a transparent dark green paint with a thick consistency that had to be applied first with a brush and then dabbed onto the surface to achieve an even coating. The painter could use either his hand or a piece of cotton or wool covered with linen. Experiments have shown the reason for this: when brushed on without dabbing, the paint starts to wrinkle after only a few days.²⁴ Thus, fingerprints and the imprints of cloth are often found on the greens in paintings by the Dossi, most probably indicating that verdigris was being used as Armenini describes.²⁵ Other critical factors for preserving this pigment were careful preparation and varnishing as soon as possible after it had been applied, in order to seal it from the oxidizing effects of the air.²⁶

To obtain a particularly brilliant green, the Dossi used colored underpaints such as lead-tin

yellow (*bianco di piombo-stagno*), which analysis has found to be present in the *Allegory with Pan* and in all of Dosso's paintings in the Galleria Estense in Modena.²⁷ The range of hues could be varied even further by adding other pigments to the copper resinate or verdigris.

To enhance the sense of depth in his landscapes, Dosso often began by laying down a layer of blue darker than the blue of the sky. Next, in the area where trees were to appear he put down an even darker blue. Then he applied highlights for the trees by stippling on a color probably made from lead white mixed with some green, varying the size and shape of each touch of the brush with great deftness. A green glaze, possibly of copper resinate or verdigris, was then pulled over the whole to unify the scheme. The blue tones so prominent in Dosso's landscapes today are probably more pronounced than he intended because a green or yellow glaze has been lost.

The red lakes in many of Dosso's paintings were often applied in a similar manner,²⁸ including dabbing with either a cloth or with the hands. The only difference is that instead of being put on over an underpaint of lead-tin yellow, the reds were applied over a predominantly lead white substrate that gave them a particular brilliance. To achieve depth of color it was necessary to build up layers, because the lake pigments are naturally translucent in oil. Of course, there are exceptions in Dosso's use of lakes: in the *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41), the cloth draped across the legs of the young man is painted in red lake over a preparatory layer of vermillion,²⁹ a combination one often finds in trecento and quattrocento paintings.

These brief observations on Dosso's methods of painting are meant to serve as a starting point for a fuller assessment of his place in the early history of oil painting in Italy. Perhaps the most important yet perplexing problems involve Dosso's response to the creative process that Giorgione introduced. Will we ever be able to determine with any certainty what Dosso was probing for when he reworked his compositions? What about works by Dosso that do not demonstrate such complex changes: how did he

prepare them, and why was the process of making them so different? This exhibition offers an unparalleled opportunity to compare a large number of paintings by Dosso and Battista.

Once the works have been studied together, we hope to be able to provide further observations on Dosso's technique that will help us understand him as an outstanding creative force.

1. The costly technical examinations were made possible by a generous grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, supplemented by study funds from The J. Paul Getty Museum and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Particular thanks and recognition go to Barbara Schleicher for her restoration of the *Allegory of Hercules* and the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, Maurizio Seracini of EDITECH in Florence for his excellent x-radiographs, and the technicians of EMMEBICI in Rome, Beatrice de Ruggiero, Marco Cardinali, and Claudio Falcucci.
- We would like to thank the staff at the J. Paul Getty Museum paintings conservation studio, in particular Mark Leonard, Yvonne Szafran, Elisabeth Mention, Elma O'Donoghue, and Diane Mooradian, for their invaluable help. We are grateful to Louis Meluso and Jack Ross for their photographs of the x-radiographs and to Maria Assunta Sorrentino of the Galleria Borghese for her help and inspiration.
2. See Vasari 1907, pp. 226–29.
3. See Dunkerton in Milan 1991, pp. 260–61.
4. On changes in technique in Venice, see especially Rosand 1982, pp. 15–26; Steer in London 1983–84, pp. 41–43; Lazzarini 1987, pp. 115–36; Dunkerton 1994, pp. 63–75.
5. Vasari 1907, p. 230.
6. On the medium analysis of Dosso's *Adoration of the Magi* in the National Gallery, London, which confirmed his use of walnut oil, see White and Pilc 1995, pp. 88–89.
7. We are grateful to Narayan Khandekar and Michael Schilling of the Getty Conservation Institute for their analysis.
8. This is evident from the thread counts given in the entries below.
9. See Plesters 1978, p. 38.
10. On Giorgione's methods of composition, see particularly Anderson 1997, pp. 83–125.
11. We thank Gianluigi Colalucci, who cleaned and restored the painting in 1982–83, for discussing it with Andrea Rothe and for providing a transparency.
12. The classic formulation of this idea appears in Gilbert 1952, pp. 202–16.
13. Report on the analysis done by ENEA of the paintings by the Dossi in the Galleria Estense in Modena, April 15, 1996, p. 15. We are particularly grateful to Jadranka Bentini and Giovanna Paolozzi for sharing this information with us.
14. See Berrie and Fisher 1993, pp. 70–74; Berrie 1994, pp. 308–11.
15. Vasari 1907, pp. 230–31; Armenini 1586, p. 125.
16. As noted in the condition report by Gianluigi Colalucci, who restored the painting in 1982–83.
17. Crowe and Cavalcaselle 1882–85, vol. 2, pp. 164–67.
18. This view was recently supported by John Shearman in his paper "Raphael and the Two Dossi," delivered at the symposium "Dosso Dossi and His Age," Getty Research Institute and The J. Paul Getty Museum, May 9–11, 1996.
19. This medium has not yet been identified in Dosso's works, but it has been found in paintings of his contemporaries, such as Moretto da Brescia. See Vienna 1996–97, pp. 104, 112.
20. On Venetian pigments, see particularly Lazzarini 1987, pp. 115–36; Dunkerton 1994, pp. 63–75.
21. A payment to Dosso for pigments, including orpiment, is recorded for October 15, 1524; see A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 49, no. L.
22. Warnings about the instability of copper resinate and verdigris appear in treatises by Cennino Cennini, Leonardo da Vinci, Pierre Lebrun, Pernety, and De Mayerne. See Woudhuysen-Keller 1995, p. 65.
23. Kühn 1993, pp. 131–58.
24. Woudhuysen-Keller 1995, p. 65.
25. "Se il panno si ha da far verde, il modo predetto sarà, che dopo che con verde, negro, e bianco si sarà [a]bozzato, che sia alquanto crudetto, si giunge poi con verderame un poco di vernice comune, e di giallo santo, e così accompagnato si vien velando tutto egualmente con un penello grosso di vaio, e compito si batte, o con la pianta della mano, o con un piumazzolo di bambase coperto di tela lina, fin che il color dato si vegga esser per tutto eguale, senza che vi apparisca segno alcuno di pennellate, e se non venisse à suo modo coperto alla prima, dopo che sarà asciutto se li ritorna à dar quello di novo, e batterlo pure nel modo di sopra predetto." Armenini 1586, pp. 127–28. ("If the drape is to be green, one does as follows: After the sketch is made using somewhat coarse green, black, and white, it is lightly painted with a mixture of verdigris, a little common varnish, and some *giallo santo* [a kind of yellow lake sometimes made from berries of the buckthorn (*spincervino*) or flowers of the yellow goatsbeard (*barba di becco*)]. With a coarse brush of miniver, one veils [glazes] the sketch uniformly; next one pats it either with the palm of the hand or with a little wad of cotton wool covered with linen, until the given color is uniform and no brushstrokes can be detected. And if the result is not to one's satisfaction, after the veiling is dry one repaints with the same mixture and then pats in the prescribed way." Armenini 1977, pp. 194–95.)
26. Armenini 1586, pp. 127–128; Armenini 1977, pp. 194–95.
27. Report on the analysis done by ENEA of the paintings by the two Dossi in the Galleria Estense, Modena, April 15, 1996, p. 15.
28. Armenini 1586, pp. 127–28; Armenini 1977, pp. 194–95.
29. Scientific report by Frank Preusser and Michael Schilling, the Getty Conservation Institute.

DOSSO'S WORKS IN THE GALLERIA ESTENSE, MODENA, AND THE PINACOTECA NAZIONALE, FERRARA¹

JADRANKA BENTINI

Infrared reflectographic studies made of many paintings by Dosso reveal his constant dissatisfaction with preparatory drawings and compositional plans, and the liberty with which he made revisions. If we think of the fiercely meticulous approach forty years before of the local genius Cosmè Tura, who made underdrawings that were perfect and complete even down to the descriptions of shadows and volumes (fig. 43), we can comprehend how fundamentally the principles of earlier Ferrarese Renaissance painting were subsequently overthrown by the new artists of the courts of Alfonso I and Ercole II d'Este. Called upon to execute projects with ever-increasing speed, these painters often sacrificed compositional rigor for a desired pictorial effect. Dosso's achievement lay in his attaining such mastery of his methods that he could leave open the possibilities for making changes as he worked. While in subject and basic structure his paintings were predetermined, there were no precisely defined boundaries to neutralize the charge of mystery and magic that seems to surround his figures. The use of dense oils, which darken over time, as binding agents has also contributed to the fantastical aura of Dosso's settings, where the paint seems to elude the outline. The younger Battista, on the other hand, elaborated an antithetical method, starting from an outline seemingly "cut out" from the preparatory layer and going on to fill in the color, thus strictly observing local tradition but displaying less freedom of invention than his brother (fig. 44).

If we may still be allowed to draw a parallel between Dossi and the poet Ariosto, beyond their shared vocation for legend and magic, we should look for it in the way they constructed the tales they tell: since neither artist avoided digressions or blurrings, both left the memory

(or the eye) in a position to call forth images other than those present at one particular moment. The work becomes a kind of chessboard on which the figures can move in directions different from those prescribed, while remaining in the predetermined field. However, Dosso does not provide the infinite depth beyond the image that Ariosto's poetry offers, nor the rhythmic unfolding of a wise, harmonious narrative through wondrous imagery. Rather, he keeps immersing us in the story by assembling segments, which sometimes are arranged in an illogical sequence or lack a unitary frame of reference. It is as though the delight we take in enigmas is also meant to be conveyed to us by the confusing method of painting. In the absence of compositional rigor, pleasure is created by the juxtaposition of colors as they are manipulated on the canvas and continuously transform themselves.

Studies aimed at reconstructing Dosso's painting methods have been carried out on a number of important works, using non-destructive exploratory procedures such as infrared reflectography and x-radiology, which



Fig. 43. Infrared reflectograph of Cosmè Tura, *Saint Anthony of Padua* (detail). Oil on panel. Galleria Estense, Modena



Fig. 44. Infrared reflectograph of Battista Dossi, *Vision of Saint John the Evangelist* (detail). Oil on panel. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara

can reveal revisions, additions, and superimpositions. Analyses were performed on various works in the Galleria Estense in Modena: the rhomboids formerly in the Via Coperta of the Castello at Ferrara (cat. no. 26, b–f); the portrait of Ercole I (fig. 45); and the altarpiece *Madonna and Child with Saints Sebastian and George*. Other objects of investigation were the so-called altarpiece of the Confratelli della Neve, a work of less expressive intensity; the Saint Sebastian altarpiece painted for the cathedral in Modena (fig. 1); and the Costabili polyptych, executed with Garofalo for Sant'Andrea in Ferrara and now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale there (cat. no. 6).²



Fig. 45. Dosso Dossi(?), *Duke Ercole I d'Este*. Galleria Estense, Modena

In all the paintings examined, the studies confirmed the presence of a gray preparation or imprimatura, an oil-based primer consisting of a mixture of pigments such as ceruse, charcoal black, and earth tones, applied over a base layer of gesso and glue. The use of a preparation over the traditional ground is described in precise detail by Vasari and was not really a novelty; Flemish painters, for example, achieved powerful chromatic effects by applying red lakes and other clear colors—white, blue, and green—over a similar imprimatura. Dosso, however, selectively applied a light-colored substrate over the imprimatura and then painted on the substrate. Additionally, the analyses with infrared technology confirm that the preparatory layer was applied diagonally in broad brushstrokes in which the streak marks made by the bristles are still visible (fig. 46). Thus, the imprimatura was not thickly laid on in the traditional method described by Vasari—according to which it was slapped onto the support with the palm of the hand—but rather was applied in liquid form with a paintbrush.

We know from earlier studies that Dosso's working method was somewhat improvisatory. His works reveal that there were many changes of mind during the painting process, and previously painted areas of color, reused, frequently underlie the final composition (fig. 47). Although some modification of prior intentions during the course of a painting's execution was common, Dosso's case is exceptional. His revisions might take place even during the final phases, going so far as to redefine a shape by adding a contour in the background color. In effect he modeled figures *a posteriori*, even casually, making them reemerge on the surface, but without detaching them from the background.

In all the pigments analyzed, including the dark ones, lead (in lead white) has been found; iron is similarly ubiquitous, apparently confirming the use (in the preparation) of earth pigments, which are otherwise absent from the painter's palette. In the analyses of the five rhomboids, one constant element has proved to be tin, most likely traceable to the addition of *giallolino* (lead-tin yellow) to the mix of siccative pigments in the preparation.



Fig. 46. Infrared reflectograph of *Love, or The Embrace* (cat. no. 26d; detail), showing the technique of the preparatory layer



Fig. 47. Infrared reflectograph of *Drunkenness* (cat. no. 26c; detail), showing a significant shift in the placement of the head

Dosso's painting method as identified in our analyses is consistent with that found in other recent technical studies. He used few layers of color, simplifying the process with a generally spare palette based on elementary tones: white lead, black, azurite, vermillion, red lake, green copper resinate, orpiment, and, to a limited extent, earth tones. Our research has shown that complementary colors were obtained by mixing. There is no malachite, which is not necessary because the desired effect can be obtained by mixing azurite and *giallolino*; browns were achieved by mixing azurite and small quantities of earth pigments or green copper resinate and earth pigment, with the possible addition of cinnabar.

We paid particular attention to the five rhomboids in the Galleria Estense, which are related to a sixth in the Cini collection in Venice and to another now in the Dobó István Vármúzeum in Eger, Hungary (cat. no. 26, a and g). The thinning of the Cini panel has made impossible a comparison of the wood used in all seven, which might have pointed to a common origin. The panels in Modena are all poplar; their backs show significant morphological similarities, and their grain suggests that they were all made from the same tree. The treatment of the background in the Modenese rhomboids differs somewhat from that in the Cini panel, in which there is a masonry arch in the style of Giulio Romano painted behind the four figures.

The Galleria Estense's rhomboids had been installed in the coffers of a ceiling in the ducal

palace at Modena, constructed by Bartolomeo Avanzini, which made it necessary to alter their original almond shape by inserting wedge-shaped pieces at their corners. The panels were adapted not only in shape, to fit the ceiling coffers, but also chromatically, to match the tastes of the age. Restorations by Antonio Boccolari in 1824 and Ercole Podio in 1939 attempted to even out the abraded surfaces. Tinted varnishes applied several times, even relatively recently, have obscured the backgrounds.

The artist's application of paint is very modern and at times even aggressive. He proceeds swiftly in broad, overlapping brushstrokes of differing thickness, ranging down to final material touches for details that convey all the richness of the setting through mere hints in the embroideries, the jewelry, or the undulations of hairstyles. These touches, even with minimal amounts of white and yellow, enliven the otherwise dense, pasty tone of the color—as do similar bright hues that Dosso adds elsewhere as filament-like surface highlights, to embellish landscapes, fabrics, or flowers.

Although analysis of pigments and medium cannot prove the intervention of a specific hand in the painting, since the same materials were used by both masters and assistants in a studio, the detection of certain original combinations and certain ways of applying and superimposing colors in relation to the overall composition can in fact identify hands. In the rhomboids, the hands of more than one painter cannot be distinguished by the present writer because all five panels are of consistent quality and,

physiognomically and structurally, match Dosso's pictures of the 1520s. A reading of the layers beneath the surface confirms the hypothesis that they are the work of Dosso: his characteristic shaping *a posteriori* of already painted figures—which themselves are realized essentially without drawing or any scheme other than the overall compositional plan—is a constant throughout.

While examination of the rhomboids with infrared reflectography did not consistently uncover the lapis lazuli described in the documentation of the works, the cleaning of a broad area of the panel called *Love* or *The Embrace* has revealed the unmistakable presence of lapis (ultramarine) as the background color against which the scenes were set. The traces of gold found all along the edges of the panels might be due to their later installation in the ceiling coffers, which were gilded. This seems all the more likely because the alterations made to fit the paintings into their new settings were disguised by repainting that concealed even the slightest discrepancy. The precious nature of the materials used in the rhomboids extends as well to the reds and oranges, which contain

cinnabar (identified by the presence of mercury) and orpiment and realgar (indicated by the presence of arsenic), an element not previously found in any other works in Modena. Cleaning of the *Drunkenness* panel revealed the outline of a third figure on the right, which probably had been painted over when the backgrounds were retouched. The figure emerges more clearly still in the x-radiograph analysis conducted, thanks to the Kress Foundation, upon completion of the restoration.

Our analysis of preparation and paint layers extended as well to the altarpiece with Saints George and Sebastian. There a disturbing *craquelure*, or crackle pattern, had opened up in the light grounds (the same thing was encountered in the rhomboids in the draperies painted with red lake; see fig. 48). The crackling occurs when there is too high a proportion of binding material to pigment, or when too much drier is used to speed up polymerization of the paint layer. This was also the cause of the crackle in Saint George's fine cloak in the Costabili altarpiece.

A more definitive preparatory drawing than that done for the previously discussed pictures, with more precise outlines, was found by infrared analysis of the portrait of Ercole I. This official painting, which occupied a very specific place in the gallery of illustrious family portraits, was painted to be looked at from up close and fully appreciated, down to the perfect detail of the hat-jewel and the honorific collar.

Adriano Franceschini's rediscovery, in the 1513 expense book of the city of Ferrara, of documents recording payments made to Garofalo and Dossi for work on the Costabili polyptych sheds new light on Dosso's early years—which until recently were thought to have been spent in Titian's shadow—and, indeed, on the artist's entire career.³

Infrared reflectographic analysis of the Costabili polyptych reveals the difference in the working methods of the two artists. The hand of Garofalo, the older painter, is evident in the decisive, continuous stroke that models the face of the Virgin. Garofalo was responsible for executing the figure of the young Baptist, the entire panel of Saint Sebastian, and the saint in the

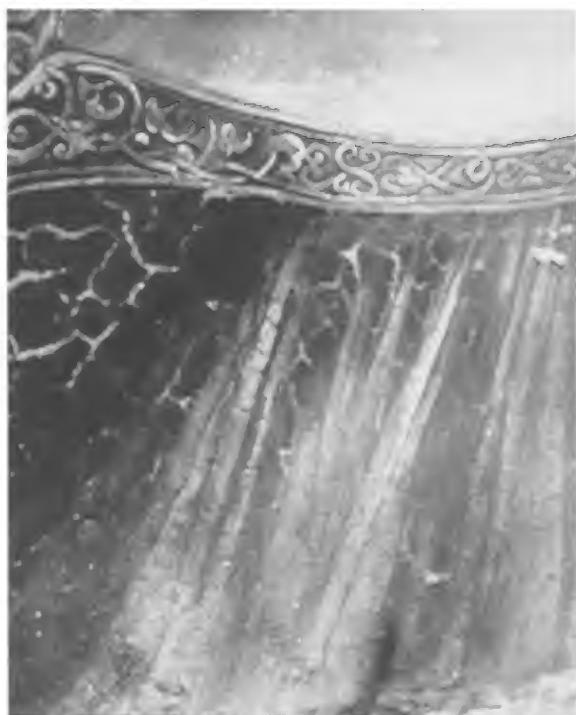


Fig. 48. Detail of *Conversation* (cat. no. 26b), showing *craquelure*, or crackle pattern, in the garment



Fig. 49. Infrared reflectograph of the Costabili altarpiece (cat. no. 6; detail), showing rotation of the position of Saint George's head



Fig. 50. Infrared reflectograph of the Costabili altarpiece (cat. no. 6; detail), showing rotation of the position of Saint Andrew's head

background on the left behind Saint Andrew, as well as for laying out the figure of Saint Jerome. Work on the polyptych was not divided rationally between the two artists; an alternation of the two hands can be seen even in a single figure, although the pigments used by both artists are identical. The altarpiece seems to have been painted in rather a hurry, with the faces of the four saints to left and right of the throne inserted at the last minute; the line of the parapet on the throne shows through them clearly.

With his probing method of working, Dosso overtook and artistically surpassed his older colleague. In the areas that he painted, almost throughout, angles were readjusted and revisions made. Soon after they were painted, the saints were transformed by rotations of their faces and eyes (figs. 49, 50); in fact, what we have is one painting superimposed on another, but unable to cancel out completely the underlying version. As a result, the image, when one looks

closely, is cloudy, even contradictory.

Dossi proves to be the faster painter of the two, continuously going outside the fixed outlines of the figures. He dabs touches of reflected light on the dark areas; deposits brushfuls of color to create chromatic density and texture at the points where the detail has the highest relief; and freely alters the contours, spilling the forms outside the outlines and onto the backgrounds. Garofalo is more linear in his definition of the subject and more compact; he does not use threads of paint to render the light, as Dosso does, and the difference is evident if one compares the smooth luminous areas of the armor at the feet of Garofalo's Saint Sebastian with the reflections on the armor of Dosso's Saint George (figs. 51, 52). Garofalo's work is more carefully detailed in the large color fields of the clothing, more modeled and volumetric in the faces and the delicate limbs. He remains faithful to a method of draftsmanship, as emerges



Fig. 51. Garofalo, Armor at Saint Sebastian's feet, from the Costabili altarpiece (cat. no. 6; detail)



Fig. 52. Dosso Dossi, Saint George's armor, from the Costabili altarpiece (cat. no. 6; detail)



Fig. 53. Drawing of putti found on the reverse of the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece panel, Duomo, Modena

quite clearly in his classically firm preparatory drawings of figures and contours. Such under-drawings have been found beneath the surface of works like his Suxena altarpiece of 1514 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara), a painting that is more refined but less heroic than the Costabili altarpiece.

While Dosso's *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece (fig. 9) can no longer be seen at first hand, since it was destroyed in World War II, its figures of Saint Bernardino on the left and God in glory at the top were probably painted by the same anonymous member of his workshop as the altarpiece of the Confratelli della Neve. Inventories make it clear that the latter work was in Alfonso IV's gallery by 1663 (described as by "Benvenuto") and in the eighteenth century was transported to the monastery at Mugnano built by Ercole III. No doubt it was moved there partly because of its subject, but in some way it must have also been considered an Este "family" painting, in which the flanking figures recalled past court liturgies. As reflectography revealed, the linear underpinnings of the composition are actually meticulous and highly precise; the small hill separating the brethren from the landscape and the landscape itself are painted over the background of sky, while the architectural structures cover a prior outline that shows through behind the tower. Thus—with the exception of the countryside, which is done freehand and in broad strokes—the execu-

tion of the painting, while full of revisions, is done over a definite design, almost a charted map, in a method quite different from Dossi's usual manner.

From 1518 to 1521 Dossi worked on the panel intended for the altar of the Confraternità della Mensa dei Preti in the Duomo of Modena (fig. 1). This is a work of very high quality, although the Divine Glory at the top may not be the work of Dosso. The crucifix held by the figure on the right is a later insertion, no doubt added when the patrons asked that the figure of Job they had originally requested be changed to a figure of Saint Jerome. First subjected to a restoration by Sidonio Centenari and Augusto Dall'Aglio in 1894, the altarpiece was restored again three years ago, at which time some interesting drawings in charcoal were found on the back (figs. 53, 54).

The drawings, of various independent subjects, are true sketches with no connection to the figures on the front. They do not seem related to anything of the little we know of Dossi's graphic



Fig. 54. Drawing of a castle found on the reverse of the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece panel, Duomo, Modena

production, which is limited to drafts that lay out specific compositions. With these drawings, however, we are looking at annotations, notes, stray thoughts, testimony to the painter's habit of using even the supports of paintings as fields on which to set down impressions for future images. One is tempted to identify two of the sketches—depicting a landscape and the snout of a crouching animal—with, respectively, the architectural background and the grimacing dragon in the altarpiece for the church of Saint Agostino in Modena (fig. 6). Indeed, that is the only work in which a spired edifice of this sort appears, though without the bridge below. Two other sketched figures, a larger one sitting, another smaller one standing and involved in combat, are interwoven in a tangle of scarcely comprehensible lines; below, a cherub's face appears in frontal view, its outline sketched in

but the roundness of the head barely hinted at, like the other beautiful children's faces on the right-hand part of the wooden support. Here, more than in other details, one recognizes the artist's style as it appears in drawings attributed to him (Musée du Louvre, Paris): precise, repeated contours in the features and expressions, and sketchy definition of the tops of the heads and the hair, as if they are dissolving in a hypothetical light. Like a butterfly alighting, there then appears on the support a woman in profile welcoming another woman kneeling at her feet, a subject that is repeated numerous times in small works by both Dosso and Battista and thus cannot be identified precisely. Next to these a male profile with a hint of a beard seems to have been begun on top of a head in ancient style with a Roman military cloak, which looks almost like the design for a medal.

1. This subject was previously treated, with many illustrations, in a paper given by the present writer at the conference "Dosso Dossi and His Age, II," held in Trent, April 3–5, 1997. At that time I had the opportunity to exchange many ideas with Andrea Rothe and Anna Coliva, colleagues also interested in Dosso's *modus pingendi*.

Of great value for this work were two studies, Berrie and Fisher 1993 and Braham and Dunkerton 1981.

2. All the restorations undertaken of works by Dosso and Battista Dossi in the Galleria Estense of Modena were preceded by nondestructive analyses (x-ray diffraction, or XRD), conducted by the ENEA (Ente per le Nuove Tecnologie, l'Energia e l'Ambiente Unità Salvaguardia Patrimonio Artistico) in April 1995. In

1996 and 1997 infrared reflectographic analyses were conducted directly by the local Soprintendenza and were also performed on the large Costabili polyptych at the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Ferrara; most of the other paintings there by Dossi and those by Garofalo, Ortolano, and Calzolaretto were examined as well. From the wealth of material thus obtained, here treated only in part, it was possible to draw revealing conclusions about the different working methods of individual Ferrarese painters. The reading and interpretation of the test results were carried out by Giovanna Paolozzi Strozzi. The reflectographs were made by Giulio Gavioli.

3. See Franceschini 1997 and the biographical essay above, p. 6.

DOSSO'S WORKS IN THE GALLERIA BORGHÈSE: NEW DOCUMENTARY, ICONOGRAPHICAL, AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION¹

ANNA COLIVA

In the last few years, important new information has come to light concerning the paintings by Dosso Dossi that are now in the Galleria Borghese or were formerly in the collection of Cardinal Scipione Borghese. Discoveries have emerged both because of a renewed interest in documentary research, a pursuit that had been more or less stagnant after Paola Della Pergola's work,² and because new examinations of the artist's working methods have been conducted.³

The documentary findings on these various works can be briefly summarized.⁴ An inventory drawn up before Cardinal Borghese's death in 1633, never published until this year, contains the first descriptions of nine paintings that constituted a series of *mandorle*, or oval-shaped, pictures from Alfonso I's bedroom in the castle complex at Ferrara and that were sent to Scipione Borghese in Rome in 1608 by his representative, Ezio Bentivoglio (see entry for cat. no. 26).⁵ Except for one, the existing pictures from this series are now converted to diamond, or rhomboidal, shapes. The provenance of several of these paintings had previously been unclear. Specifically, it had been questioned whether two panels now in Eger, Hungary, and the Cini collection, Venice, come from the same series as the five undisputed pictures in Modena.⁶ Exact descriptions of those two works that appear at nos. 39 and 75 of the inventory, however, should help elucidate the situation. The Eger painting (cat. no. 26g) is described as "A picture on panel, a man embracing a woman shown in half length. Gilt frame, double square shape, 3 [palmi] high, by Dosso"; the Cini painting (cat. no. 26a) as "A picture on panel, with two women scratching at each other and two other heads. Gilt double square frame, 4 [palmi] high by 3¾ wide, by Dosso."⁷ The lat-

ter picture is also rather precisely described in the 1688 inventory of the Sacchetti collection, although the female figure is misunderstood there as "a man dressed in red who opens his mouth at a woman, with two other heads. 4 *palmi* high, 3 *palmi* and 11 *onci* wide."⁸

The pre-1633 Borghese inventory includes as well (no. 33) the description of a tondo⁹ also from the duke's private rooms (see cat. no. 32): "A painting on panel with twelve angels [angles], with five heads with a crown above, one with flowers in the hand. Gilded frame five [palmi] high. By Dosso."¹⁰ Here we see again the exactness of the inventory's descriptions, which becomes very important in the case of the two rhomboids that now are lost but were once in the Stanza delle Grazie. Manilli described them in 1650, but only as "two paintings . . . with three half-figures in each."¹¹ Thus, the Borghese pre-1633 inventory gives the only real description of these lost works, as (no. 61) "Two pictures on panel with three half-length figures in each, two of which wear a garland and one [with] finger at the mouth, the other one garlanded and a woman with a garland in her hand. Gilded frame, 4 high, 3½ wide."¹² Taking together the descriptions of all ten pictures—the five rhomboids in Modena, the ones in Eger and Venice, the lost two, and the tondo—a total of thirty-two heads are represented, exactly the "thirty-two half-length figures" that Bentivoglio mentioned in a letter to the duke dated March 12, 1608.¹³ It seems that Dosso deviated from the formula of three heads in each rhomboid; indeed, the Eger painting contains two figures and the Cini painting four, a discrepancy that has called into question¹⁴ the idea that the paintings all belong to the same group.¹⁵

Number 26 in the pre-1633 inventory is also attributed to Dosso and is described as "A



Fig. 55. X-radiograph of *Saint Catherine*, attributed to Dosso Dossi (detail). Galleria Borghese, Rome



Fig. 56. X-radiograph of *Apollo* (cat. no. 28; detail), showing Dosso's characteristic technique

painting on canvas of a landscape with various phantoms. . . . Black-and-gold frame, 4½ [palmi] high, 6¼ wide, by Dosso.”¹⁶ This work is not Dosso’s, however, but rather Girolamo da Carpi’s *Magical Procession*, now in the Galleria Borghese.¹⁷ On the other hand, Dosso’s *Apollo* (cat. no. 28), long thought to have been part of Bentivoglio’s 1608 shipment from Ferrara, does not appear in the inventory. It has recently been demonstrated, in fact, that it was part of the collection of Ludovico Ludovisi, who was originally from Bologna, and was purchased by Cardinal Capponi after Ludovisi’s collection was dispersed in 1632. Capponi left the painting to the Borghese in his will in 1659.¹⁸

The listing in the same inventory of *Saint Catherine*, copied by Cavaliere d’Arpino after an original by Dosso,¹⁹ finally resolves a longstanding question about the execution of that painting. Obviously derived from the Saint Petersburg *Sibyl* (cat. no. 31), *Saint Catherine* corresponds neither to Dosso’s working method nor to the narrow cultural ambiance in which it had been placed. Instead it shows insistent Mannerist qualities, typical, if not of a Tuscan style, of the Central Italian school. The attribution to Cavaliere d’Arpino accords with his style, which is

characterized by a smooth, dense surface and a particular linear refinement.²⁰ This painting very likely entered Scipione Borghese’s collection when he seized the artist’s property, an inventory of which lists a *Saint Catherine*.²¹ The fabric, a plain weave like most of Dosso’s canvases, is in this case rather densely woven.²²

An infrared examination of *Saint Catherine* reveals that in its execution the contours of the original composition were carefully followed: there are none of the continual changes and adjustments typical of Dosso’s style. This suggests that there was an underdrawing, but it is not visible through the thick paint layer. What changes do appear are made in the outlines, a phenomenon typical of copies, since the artist concentrates on the contour as he attempts to match the original. A cross section of the paint layers shows that the painting is built up densely and without much articulation, as opposed to the complex layering of glazes typical of Ferrarese artists.

Most surprising, however, is the x-radiograph of *Saint Catherine*, which reveals a process of modeling unlike Dosso’s (fig. 55). The planes of the face—the eyeballs, forehead, chin, and cheekbones—are constructed by contrasting light and



Fig. 57. Infrared reflectograph of Dosso Dossi, *Gyges and Candaules* (detail), showing brush underdrawing. Galleria Borghese, Rome

shadow in an almost spherical disposition of masses. Originating in Tuscany and Central Italy, this technique is the opposite of the one employed by Dosso, who set down flesh tones in broken, undefined brushstrokes (see fig. 56). Unlike his contemporaries in Tuscany and Central Italy, Dosso did not begin with compositional drawings and proceed to the placement of light areas and then of color, but moved instead from paint layer to paint layer until he had defined the light and color values.

The case of the *Saint Catherine* is exemplary, not so much for the attribution, in itself of little significance, but for the way that rigorous

archival research and the most advanced technical analysis complemented each other to lead to a clear and valuable result.

The technical analyses recently performed were for the most part diagnostic images that aimed to determine whether there is any consistency in Dosso's working methods over the course of his career. That career is exceptionally well represented in the Galleria Borghese: from the artist's early works, among which this author includes *Gyges and Candaules*, to his most mature paintings, such as *Saints Cosmas and Damian* (cat. no. 23), dated to the late 1530s.²³

Analyses of the Borghese pictures as well as others subjected to the same tests indicate that Dosso's painting technique was indeed consistent. The chief characteristic of his method, one that emerges again and again, is the absolute fluidity of his technique. His compositions often changed as he worked on them. Passages in the paintings were frequently rethought, finished areas were reworked, and the arrangement and even the conception of characters and narratives were altered. It seems likely, then, that Dosso did not use preliminary studies, destined in any case to be departed from, but rather sketched directly on the prepared ground with charcoal or white chalk or paint, depending on the tone of the ground.

Examination of all seven Dosso paintings now in the Borghese resoundingly confirms this understanding of his working methods. Each shows at least some modifications, if not real pentimenti, although some of these are not important to a final understanding of the work. The small *Virgin and Child* (cat. no. 18) has, for example, an unsure indication of an additional head to the right, which was later painted out (see also "Poetry with Paint" above, p. 59). X-radiographs of the *Nativity* (cat. no. 17) reveal that there was a drapery, perhaps a sleeve, behind and to the left of the Virgin, that Joseph's head was originally positioned higher, and that the arch was at first naturally shaped rock rather than a construction. The only important change in the *Apollo* (cat. no. 28) is the redefinition of the fingers holding the viola, the positions of which were adjusted several times.



Fig. 58. X-radiograph of *Melissa* (cat. no. 12), showing various major changes in the composition, especially the initial inclusion of a standing male figure at the left

The compositional sketch of the *Gyges and Candaules* emerges particularly clearly in the x-radiographs. While no fundamental changes were found, it is interesting that the profiles of Gyges and the queen were considerably modified in the final version. Infrared (fig. 57) also reveals that the compositional sketch was drawn with a flowing and continuous line, which is the case as well in works attributed by Longhi to the young Dosso. For example, a similar line delineated the female donor in the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in the Capitoline Museum (fig. 106) and the figures in *Salome* (private collection, Milan), and especially, Saint Catherine in the small altarpiece in Glasgow (fig. 107). All these works are thought to belong

to the earliest part of Dosso's career, although their attribution to Dosso remains uncertain.

A most significant discovery made during this research came from the x-radiograph (fig. 58) of *Melissa* (cat. no. 12). In the area between the sorceress and the trees, where the dog is now, Dosso had originally painted a standing figure of a knight in armor, his head slightly inclined and his gaze locked with Melissa's. In the final version, she inexplicably looks off into the infinite distance. The head of the now-vanished knight was bare; his pose was sinuous and elegant, with his left foot crossed over his right ankle, his knee bent (a trace of it is still visible, under the dog's muzzle), and his upper body leaning slightly toward the sorceress. The

same dog, but smaller, appeared behind the knight. The figure of the knight was almost finished, and a second preparatory coat of lead white was necessary to paint it out. The composition was thus originally organized around the two thematically related figures. And in fact, the figure of Melissa expands spatially only toward the right; the sole element that extends beyond her to the left is the inscribed tablet, which in the final version was made to incline more than originally.

The initial conception of the scene, with the sorceress and the knight-in-armor in silent dialogue, was a narrative significantly different from that of the final version and most likely illustrated the episode in *Orlando Furioso* (VIII:16–17) in which Melissa frees the knight Astolfo from Alcina's spell. The good sorceress helped Astolfo find his weapons, including the invincible golden lance against which, in the x-radiograph, he gently leans. One can just make out the long, thin pole that is nestled in the crook of his arm and extends up into the branches and down between his legs. Thus it is probably Astolfo who was portrayed, at the moment when he regains his precious arms and when Melissa, with a look full of solicitude but also tinged with amusement, watches him “to his first shape transformed”²⁴ (he had been turned into a tree by Alcina). In the final version of the painting, from which this narrative thread is missing, the whole story seems as magically suspended as Melissa's gaze. She is lost in her own thoughts, surrounded by her attributes—the ring, book, and fire—with which she is determined to “burn images, and loose / Or cancel hag-knot, rhomb, or magic noose.”²⁵

Although we cannot know why Dosso changed the construction of his narrative so radically, it seems likely that his motives were essentially compositional and pictorial. With a second large protagonist, the foreground would have been too crowded and the painting would have lacked the calm, solemn spatial expansion and magnificent balance that make Melissa one of the great figural inventions of the sixteenth century—plunged as she is into the depths of the landscape, which, like a Madonna by Raphael, she dominates and unifies through her

own monumentality. With this poetic effect Dosso moves beyond mere illustration of Ariosto's story to its evocation, in the suspended dimension of the fable that the artist preferred. Everything in the final version—the dog, the warriors, the bird, the men “changed . . . Some into rock or tree”²⁶ (detail, p. 116, top), and the armor placed in the foreground to conjure the presence of the hero—is an evanescent metaphor ready to be transformed by a magic touch. If Dosso's first version was a narrative of an episode from Ariosto's tale, his final elaboration frees the work from its literary bonds and attains a meaning less easily expressed and more uncertain; it becomes a universal metaphor for liberation, achieved by making the pure means of painting paramount.

Here, paradoxically, something profoundly poetic is comprehended by means of the purely technical information supplied by the x-radiograph. The shifting quality of Dosso's working method—daubing, changing, and repainting—was analogous to the theme itself; the mythical aspect of the story, so evanescent and uncertain, allowed the artist to be inexact, to avoid scrupulous precision in the narrative and the symbols. Yet what finally triumphs is the pictorial value of the painting—both for its poetry and for the extraordinary quality of its surface treatment.

In the *Mythological Allegory* too, Dosso seems to have reconsidered the composition as he painted the picture (cat. no. 39). As with almost all the artist's work in the Galleria Borghese, no compositional drawing appears in the infrared photographs or the reflectographic images; the x-radiograph, however, contains extremely complicated information (see fig. 89 and the Technical Observations, p. 212). Although of very uneven opacity, it reveals that the figure of the old woman supporting the reclining nude (Callisto?) was added over a finished background of trees. Her original position was then reworked to move her back and to give a greater torsion to her upper body. We can also see that the standing figure (Diana?) was originally taller, and the right side of her drapery more developed—so much so that the ballooning of her mantle made her the most imposing figure

in the painting. The landscape behind her was more open, and there was a broad expanse of sky with a crescent moon, an iconographic reference if the figure is Diana. Another female figure, almost brought to completion, originally appeared on the left side of the picture, which is now filled by landscape. Running onto the scene, the woman was dressed in a long robe with a sash tied around her waist.

Here, too, is a work whose original composition was completely altered, but unlike the *Melissa*, it keeps the same number of figures, and they seem to play the same roles in the narrative as before. Both the figure painted out and the old woman added appear to offer solicitous protection to the sleeping figure; the old woman cradles her head, and the left-hand figure in the first version ran to her assistance, as if to rescue her from the standing woman's condemnation.

The identification of this painting with the story of Diana and Callisto (a nymph who was banished after her impregnation by Zeus) is not entirely convincing,²⁷ and the iconographically different first version seems no closer to the myth of Callisto. Nor does the work appear to represent, as is sometimes suggested, the metamorphosis of the nymph Syrinx, who fled from Pan.²⁸ Rather, the gloomy night and the utterly worn-out nymph, who, seemingly dissolved in exhaustion, is protected by the faithful old maid-servant, all suggest that the painting illustrates the story of Canens.²⁹ The nymph Canens wandered in search of her vanished lover, Picus. She had been singing (the meaning of the name Canens) when he left her, and when she eventually pined away, nothing remained of her but the echo of her voice.

As with *Melissa*, Dosso's changes to this painting appear determined by a desire for compositional balance. The final version seems more coherent than the first; the movement toward the right, where the figures are concentrated, is dynamic, building like a wave and culminating in the gesture of the standing figure. It is counterbalanced on the left by the limitless depth of the landscape, fully illuminated by the light of an unseen moon, whose presence is implied by a bright patch between the clouds.

The *Mythological Allegory* is closely linked to

the *Allegory with Pan* in the Getty Museum (cat. no. 38), with both works featuring a reclining nude and an old woman who protects her. Moreover, the young woman present in the first version of the Borghese painting and subsequently painted out echoes, in her movement and her uncovered hair, the standing woman in the *Allegory with Pan*.

Recent studies have also necessitated some refinements in our interpretation of the iconography of *Saints Cosmas and Damian* (cat. no. 23).³⁰ The two physician saints appear in this painting as dental surgeons, classified in the sixteenth century as medical surgeons. Cosmas has just finished extracting a tooth, visible in the glass, with a *pellicano*, an instrument named for its resemblance to a pelican. He is holding the patient's jaw between his hands, and the patient is sticking out his tongue.³¹

Cosmas and Damian is the only one of the Borghese Dossos to exhibit any thin-line underdrawing, not done with a brush; it appears only in the area of the patient's face, where the infrared has revealed slight traces of this drawing. Additionally, the x-radiograph shows that the flesh tones in this painting were created by a technique somewhat different from Dosso's usual one. The outlines of the woman's eyes are drawn rather than built up in the artist's more typical sketchy manner, and the patient's face, thinly painted, is also atypical, because the x-radiographs reveal less lead white in the flesh tones. Such disparities support the often-suggested hypothesis that a second artist collaborated on this work, particularly on the figure of the patient, seated and seen from behind. The layering of paint appears looser than usual over the entire surface. While the pictorial technique employed for all the decorative details is characteristic of Dosso, the application of the glazes is less compact, and the final surface is somewhat slack and not as well defined as in his other works. This painting technique seems to be responsible for the effect in the picture of soft, swollen forms. Therefore, in this author's opinion, the work and others like it, including the *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25), must be dated, as they often have been, very late in the artist's career, even though there is a close

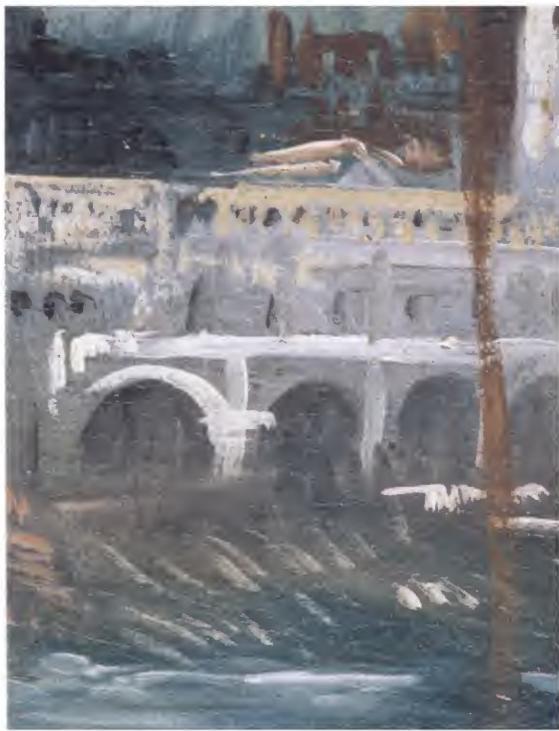


Fig. 59. Macrophotographic detail of architecture in the background of *Apollo* (cat. no. 28)

formal resemblance between the anatomies of the figures in them and those in the earlier *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields* (cat. no. 24a) and *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece in the cathedral of Modena (fig. 1). Indeed, a careful comparison of the techniques employed in these works is telling. The figures in the earlier examples, although formally very similar to the others, are constructed volumetrically from a dense weave of brushstrokes, easily visible in the *Saint Sebastian*; in *Saints Cosmas and Damian*, on the other hand, the technique is looser and the surface less densely interwoven. Technically the transformation is rather conspicuous, from the solid, contained plasticity of the figures in the early works, clearly modeled on Michelangelo's, to larger, less clearly defined bodies of only illusory strength, which fade into an equally vague background. It is interesting to see that this dilation of the figures, their soft swelling, is specifically the result of a painting technique, that is, a loosening of the web of glazes and a reduction of the layering.

A complete reading of the diagnostic tests run on the Borghese paintings has substantially confirmed the findings on Dosso's technique

that are emerging from other technical studies of his work. All the paintings have registered, on average, a rather low radiopacity, suggesting the presence of a dark ground, generally in the gray range (as one sees in the crackled areas), with little lead white in it. This feature has already been noted as typical of Dosso's technique.³² X-radiographs and infrared images indicate that in some cases the ground was applied with rapid diagonal brushstrokes and therefore lacks the thickness recommended by Vasari. In general, Dosso favored thin glazes rather than thick applications of paint.

It is likely that the artist generally made sketches in chalk or charcoal directly on the ground. In some instances, however, the infrareds reveal under the paint layers a compositional sketch done in broad, rapid black brushstrokes. These brushstrokes outline the figures and the drapery folds, as we can see in the detailed microphotographs. Often visible through the gaps in the paint crackle, they appear to be dark brown, almost black, and are distinct from the grayish brown ground. They are particularly evident in *Gyges and Candaules* (fig. 57), *Melissa*, *Apollo*, the *Nativity*, and the *Virgin and Child*. In *Melissa*'s blue mantle, the outline is doubled with a parallel line to indicate the chiaroscuro, another sign that it is a compositional under-drawing rather than a painted contour line added later to redefine the outlines or make the figures stand out in greater relief. In general, the drawings revealed in the works examined here, whether hidden under the paint or emerging from beneath it, should be thought of as elements establishing the design; conversely, the reinforcement of contours by darkening the background to set the figures into greater contrast, which occurs in the rhomboids in Modena, is a painterly expedient.³³

In many of the paintings examined, a characteristic dense crackle pattern appears in a circular pattern, probably because of the drying agents Dosso used on prior layers as he made his constant changes.

An examination of the paint layers themselves confirms Dosso's preference for a spare palette with a few primary hues mixed to obtain complementary colors. His application of yel-

lows is interesting and consistent: in areas of the strongest highlights they seem built up from full-bodied pigment of a grainy, streaky consistency. As Andrea Rothe and Dawson Carr suggest, the method of application may well hide the use of mixed binders, more precisely an emulsion of tempera and oil (see p. 62 and fig. 42). The use of lapis lazuli is rare, but it is securely identified in the *Nativity*; blues were generally painted with azurite. Another distinct characteristic of Dosso's work is the red dot he puts at the inside corner of the eye (fig. 40), a clever pictorial accent that is not geometrically defined.

In sum, Dosso's painted surfaces are executed

with extreme refinement. Luminous touches at the edge of the pupils continue at the outer part of the eyeball in thin, light-colored vertical brushstrokes, which Dosso also uses for the refined views of architecture in his landscape. The macrophotographs show this degree of subtlety very clearly (fig. 59), while also revealing the marks of an almost dry brush that barely covers the surface (scumbling). The technique of using dry, elongated lines creates an uneven covering over the underlying layers of paint and allows them to show through at least partially, producing the marvelous effect of vibrating light that gives Dosso's paintings their incomparable material richness.

1. My task here was made possible only by the thorough technical reports prepared by M. Beatrice De Ruggieri, Marco Cardinali, and Claudio Falcucci at Società EMMEBICI and by Maria Assunta Sorrentino for the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici in Rome, who was also responsible for analyzing our data and comparing it to similar studies undertaken elsewhere, particularly at the Getty Museum and the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici in Modena. In writing this essay I have made constant use of the scientific and technical observations in these reports, which will be published in their entirety in the forthcoming volume *I Dosso dei Borghese*. The following non-destructive diagnostic imaging tests were undertaken: radiography; black-and-white infrared photography; infrared reflectography; false color infrared photography; fluorescent photography; photomicrography; and macrophotography. X-ray fluorescent spectrometry samples were not collected.
2. Della Pergola 1955.
3. The diagnostic imaging of all the paintings by Dosso in the Galleria Borghese was undertaken with financing provided by the Kress Foundation, to whom I express my sincere gratitude, and obtained through the kind efforts of Keith Christiansen.
4. This research was previously discussed by the author in a talk delivered at the conference "Dosso Dossi and His Age" in Malibu on May 10, 1996.
5. The first scholarly mention of the inventory was in the talk referred to in n. 4. I would like to thank Father Sandro Corradini, who discovered this inventory and has now published it (in Rome 1998, pp. 449–56), for allowing me to use the information concerning the Dosso pictures. The inventory is not dated, but both internal and external evidence make it clear that it was taken before the cardinal's death.

6. Ballarin 1994–95, p. 331, which contains a complete bibliography relating to this famous series of paintings. See the evaluation drawn up by Alfonso Benmambri on April 17, 1598 (Mezzetti 1965a, p. 137; Mezzetti 1975), and the letter written by Ezio Bentivoglio on March 12, 1608, mentioned below (see n. 13).

7. For the original Italian texts, see cat. no. 26, n. 5.

8. "Un omo vestito di rosso ch'apre la bocca ad una donna con due altre teste alto palmi 4 largo palmi 3 once 11." I would like to thank Sergio Guarino for bringing this inventory, of which he is publishing a part, to my attention. The same description is repeated in the 1705 and 1747 inventories of the Sacchetti collection, although the protagonists are correctly identified there: "Altro alto palmi 3 largo palmi 3 rappresentante quattro mezze figure di Donne, che contrastano, del Dossi, sc. 100." See Guarino in Rome 1991–92. The painting disappears after these descriptions; inexplicably, it is not in the collections of the Capitoline Museum, where the rest of the Sacchetti collection is now located.

9. It was noted again by Manilli in 1650, although less precisely; see Manilli 1650.

10. "Un quadro in tavola con dodici angeli [sic] con cinque teste una con la corona in capo una con fiori in mano cornice dorata, alto cinque, Dossi." Rome 1998, p. 450, no. 33.

11. See cat. no. 26, n. 6. Ballarin (1994–95, p. 331, no. 421) says that Manilli recorded them as being in the Stanza del Fauno, but in fact he put them in the Stanza delle Grazie.

12. Rome 1998, p. 451, no. 61. For the original Italian text, see cat. no. 26, n. 5.

13. "Dieci Quadri che servivano per sfondato di due Camerini . . . i Quadri sono dieci nove a oliva e uno grande tondo, fra tutti sono trentadue mezze figure" (Ten paintings that were installed in two small rooms

- . . . there are ten paintings, nine olive-shaped and one large tondo, altogether thirty-two half-length figures). Mezzetti 1965b, pp. 81–82.
14. Ballarin 1994–95, p. 331.
 15. Another document discovered in the archives confirms that the four oval paintings that remained in Cardinal Scipione Borghese's collection were framed in 1620: "Nel Palazzo di Borgo: c.6v Adi 10 detto [March 1620] per aver fatto n° 4 altre cornici alli 4 Quadri del Dossi alta l'una palmi 4½ quadre fattoci le cornici con mode-nature straordinarie d'albuccio montano scudi 14." Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Archivio Borghese, 4173, Falegnami dal 1607 al 1623. This document was discovered by Marina Minozzi during an examination of the Borghese archives.
 16. "Un quadro in tela d'un paese con diverse fantasme che vanno in sergazzo cornice negra, et oro, alto 4½ largo 6¼, Dossi." Rome 1998, p. 450, no. 26.
 17. Coliva 1994, p. 136, fig. 71. I would like to thank Carlo Ginzburg and Gianni Romano for their comments about the term *magico* made at the conference mentioned in note 4.
 18. Coliva 1994, p. 123; Schütze forthcoming.
 19. This information was previously discussed by this author in Coliva 1994, pp. 122–23, and in the complete catalogue *Galleria Borghese* on CD-Rom, 1996, but does not appear in Ballarin 1994–95 in the relevant entry on p. 349.
 20. Pierre Rosenberg, in a recent oral communication, agrees with this hypothesis.
 21. A.S.V., Archivio Borghese, b.346. This picture appears in Manilli 1650 as by Dosso, while in the 1790 inventory—and again in one of 1892—it is attributed, not inappropriately, to Caravaggio.
 22. An analysis carried out by EMMEBICI demonstrates that there are 21 threads per square centimeter in this canvas, as compared to an average of 17 per square centimeter.
 23. A different interpretation of the painting's dating is given by Peter Humfrey in the entry for cat. no. 23.
 24. "Rifatta . . . ne la sua prima faccia." *Orlando Furioso*, VIII:17; in Ariosto 1968, p. 64.
 25. VIII:14; ibid., p. 63.
 26. VIII:15; ibid., pp. 63–64.
 27. It is so identified in the 1790 inventory of the Quadreria Borghese, Palazzo di Campo Marzio, which was copied by Piancastelli.
 28. Gibbons 1968, pp. 89–91.
 29. See Calvesi 1969b, pp. 170–72.
 30. Barchiesi in Coliva and Barchiesi forthcoming.
 31. Ibid.
 32. As Andrea Rothe, drawing on an observation of Gianluigi Colalucci, noted in the *Apollo*, colored preparations often appear under single fields, for example, under the blues of the sky (see Technical Observations for cat. no. 28).
 33. On this technically important point it is useful to make some direct comparisons, for example, between the Borghese paintings and the series in Modena; see Jadranka Bentini's essay above.

CATALOGUE

Notes to the Reader

Catalogue entries signed PH were written by Peter Humfrey.

Catalogue entries signed ML were written by Mauro Lucco.

The author of the technical observations is Andrea Rothe.

Unless otherwise stated, works catalogued are by Dosso Dossi.

Catalogued works are exhibited in all three venues, with these exceptions:

Ferrara only: cat. nos. 6, 17, 32a, 56

New York only: cat. no. 35

Ferrara and New York only: cat. nos. 33, 34, 58

Ferrara and Los Angeles only: cat. no. 29

New York and Los Angeles only: cat. nos. 5, 18

References are cited in abbreviated form. The corresponding full citations will be found in the bibliography.

NOTES ON THE TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

All catalogued paintings that were accessible were examined, as well as a number of works not catalogued here (for technical observations on the uncatalogued works, see the appendix).

During our campaign of technical examination, various features characteristic of the work of Dosso and Battista Dossi were identified that provide specific criteria for evaluation, as follows:

1. *Determining the Original Size of the Picture:* A canvas is supported by a framework of wooden strips called a stretcher (if small pieces, or keys, are inserted into the corners to adjust the tightness) or a strainer (if without keys, the type in use in Dosso's day). Where the canvas has been stretched over the strainer it acquires a curl, or cusp, in each span between nails. However, the absence of cusping at the edges is not necessarily a sign that a canvas was later cut on that side, since it seems that canvases were frequently stretched over only one or two edges rather than all four, probably to save material. Often a more reliable way to learn whether a painting has been cut is to look for the impression of the old strainer on the canvas. From an examination of many such imprints and also those of the

central reinforcements of larger paintings, it has been established that most of the battens the Dossi used to make strainers were about six centimeters wide. Thus, even if only part of the imprint of a strainer remains, we can often reconstruct the original size of a painting. Most strainers, especially those on larger pictures, had diagonal reinforcements (also called gate legs) at the four corners, and their imprints can help corroborate other evidence on the location of edges. In some cases evidence is lacking because the canvas was cut severely or the strainer did not leave a clear imprint.

2. *Canvas:* The Dossi used mostly plain weaves, but otherwise had no predilection for a particular type of canvas. Thread counts show that the canvases vary greatly in thickness. Quite a number of pictures have butt-joined seams (see "Poetry with Paint," p. 57), which are less obtrusive than stitched ones. On butt-joined canvases, a thin strip of fine canvas that was glued over the seam is clearly apparent in the x-radiograph. Most likely there was also another strip glued on the back to equalize the tension, but such strips would have been lost during relining.

3. Oil: Linseed oil forms a hard film; walnut oil is softer but does not yellow as much. In the few works by the Dossi on which medium analysis has been done, it has been found that walnut oil predominates. In one painting, the *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38), linseed oil was identified.

4. Drawing Directly on the Canvas: Dosso seems often to have sketched out his ideas directly on the unprimed canvas, with a brush and liquid color composed mainly of carbon black. Then he covered the sketch with the gesso layer. Later, after the application of a dark preparation, he frequently sketched out his ideas again in lead white.

5. Preparation: The preparation, or initial paint layer, also called the imprimatura, is almost always in some shade of dark gray composed of a mixture of lead white, charcoal, brown earth, and possibly clay.

6. Substrate: On top of the preparation, a substrate, or underpainting, was applied. It consisted mostly of modeled layers of lead white or lead-tin yellow, sometimes mixed with red, blue, or green pigments. The modeling was done so that the thickest areas were those that would become the highlights when the glazes were applied over the substrate.

7. Pigments: Apart from the usual lead white, earth colors, and black, the pigments most commonly used by the Dossi are azurite, red lakes, verdigris, and copper resinate, which are often used as glazes. Like many Venetian painters they also used orpiment (yellow sulfide of arsenic), a very poisonous pigment frequently containing orange-red particles of realgar. Other pigments sometimes used are lead-tin yellow, vermillion, and natural ultramarine.

8. Fingerprints: Fingerprints are found often on the greens, sometimes on the reds, and occasionally on the blues. The painters used their fingers to even out the layers of colored glazes.

9. Dabbing: Evidence of dabbing with a fine cloth is also found on the greens, reds, and sometimes blues. This too was a means of obtaining the desired transparency and an even layer of color.

10. Morphological Details: Dosso and Battista had a certain predilection for depicting morphological details with great precision—the hairs in eyebrows, beards, and eyelashes, the fine points of toenails and fingernails. They often placed a red dot in the corner of the eye.

11. X-Radiographs: X-radiographs of Dosso's paintings show strong dark-light contrasts; those x-radiographs with little contrast are almost always of paintings for which the attribution is questionable. The x-rays may reveal numerous differences between the surface image and what lies below, since Dosso often made significant changes as he worked (see "Poetry with Paint," pp. 57–59). In his mature works the compositions are laid out quickly and with great dexterity.

12. Backgrounds: The buildings in background landscapes are painted primarily with vertical brushstrokes. Trees in the distance often look windswept and are painted over a dark blue substrate. These landscape areas were most likely glazed with greens or yellows that have been removed by too-thorough cleaning or have faded naturally, allowing the blue substrate to become overly dominant.

13. Animals: Animals are rendered with perspicuity and a keenly observant eye that catches details and unusual distortions.

I. Nymph and Satyr

*Ca. 1508–9
Oil on canvas, 22 3/4 × 32 3/4 in. (57.8 × 83.2 cm)
Palazzo Pitti, Florence
Galleria Palatina 147*

Provenance

Possibly acquired in Modena in 1603 for Emperor Rudolf II, Prague; Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici, Florence, by 1675 (1675 inv. no. 826, as by Andrea Schiavone); Grand Duchess Vittoria de' Medici, Villa di Poggio Imperiale, by 1691 (1691 inv. no. 992, as by Giorgione); Medici collections; Palazzo Pitti, Florence

References

Inghirami 1832, p. 43; Crowe and Cavalcaselle 1871 (1912 ed., vol. 3, p. 162); A. Venturi 1885, p. 12; Morelli 1891 (1893 ed., p. 219); Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, p. 284; Berenson 1907, p. 209; Gronau 1908, p. 433; Gardner 1911, pp. 150, 231; Zwanziger 1911, p. 111; L. Venturi 1913, pp. 196–97, 377–78; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 61–63; A. Venturi 1928, p. 941; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 153; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 86); Eisler 1948, pp. 83–84; Zampetti in Venice 1955, p. 268; Baldass 1961, p. 83; Dreyer 1964–65, p. 27, n. 84; Mezzetti 1965a, p. 86; Puppi 1965; Gibbons 1968, pp. 120–21, 175–76; Mosco in Florence

This mysterious and poetic picture is of special historical importance because, as is also proposed in the biographical essay above, it is Dosso's earliest known work. Strongly Giorgionesque in style and in character, it may well have been painted in Venice under the immediate spell of Giorgione (d. 1510) himself, several years before Dosso settled in Ferrara in 1512 or 1513. The removal of extensive overpaint in 1981–82 unfortunately confirmed the work's very worn condition, with little of the original paint surface now completely intact. Conservation treatment also had more positive results, however, revealing a number of previously obscured details, among them the leaves the female figure wears in her hair.¹

The picture has been in the Medici collections in Florence at least since 1675, when it was recorded—described as the work of Andrea Schiavone—in the collection of Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici.² By 1691 it had acquired an attribution to Giorgione,³ one still retained by Morelli in 1893. But A. Venturi (1885) suggested that it was identifiable with a picture attributed to Dosso and bought in Modena in 1603 by the painter Hans van Aachen on behalf of Emperor Rudolf II.⁴ Although still questioned by Gronau in 1908, Venturi's attribution to Dosso was subsequently universally accepted.

The painting's subject has usually been described as a satyr in sexual pursuit of a nymph—in other words, as a generic episode from classical mythology involving two of its typical figures. Eisler (1948) sought to identify the actors more precisely as the Satyr and Lydé, described by the ancient bucolic poet Moschos, while Gibbons (1968) understood them more tentatively as Jupiter, in the guise of a satyr, and Antiope. But, Gibbons admitted, many encounters between beautiful maidens and half-beasts are recorded in classical mythology, and Dosso's figures lack attributes that would permit an exact identification. Gardner (1911) suggested that the episode was based not on classical mythology but on the contemporary poet Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and that the figures are Angelica and her Saracen husband, Medoro. Refining this idea, Simari (in Florence 1986–87) interpreted the ring suspended by a chain around the woman's neck as the magic ring of Angelica, mentioned in several episodes in Ariosto's poem,

and the pursuing male as Orlando himself, transformed into a beast by his madness. This attractive interpretation has the merit of accounting for the detail of the ring; but it does not explain why Angelica, the oriental princess who placed numerous Christian and Saracen princes in the thrall of courtly love, would be shown half naked. Further, an essential element of the mad Orlando's pursuit of Angelica (xxix:59–68) is that she attempted to escape him on horseback. In any case, a subject from *Orlando Furioso*, which was begun in about 1506 and published in 1516, would be precluded if the picture dates, as is likely, to about 1508–9. The painting is probably best interpreted as its traditional title, *Nymph and Satyr*, implies: as a free poetic invention in the manner of Giorgione, which, while drawing general inspiration from classical mythology, does not seek to illustrate any particular episode. As was true for Giorgione and for Leonardo before him, at least part of the artist's intention when choosing his figures was to create an expressive contrast of types, in this case between a beautiful young female and a grotesque, animal-like male.



Fig. 60. Giorgione, *Portrait of a Lady (Laura)*. Oil on canvas. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



I

The picture's Giorgionesque character is generally agreed upon, and it has always been recognized as a relatively early work (except by Mezzetti [1965a], who dated it implausibly late, to the early 1530s). Dosso was never to be a master of dramatic narrative; but, as Mendelsohn (1914) observed, his mature works are enlivened by swirls of drapery, whereas here the action remains quiet and restrained. Gibbons (1968) similarly remarked on the poetic and enigmatic, rather than dramatic, nature of the encounter, in which the woman appears more curious and expectant than fearful or distressed. Gibbons also drew attention to the delicacy of the pictorial technique; despite the severe abrasion of the surface glazes, it is clear that the artist applied the paint thinly and evenly, with fine brushstrokes and subtle tonal modulation and not yet with the vigorous impasto characteristic of his early maturity. As in Giorgione's works, the

edges of the forms are softened by *sfumato*, which gives the figures the effect of emerging only gradually from their shadowy surroundings. Baldass (1961) rightly pointed out that Dosso's nymph, with one breast bared, sensuously draped in a red, fur-lined robe, depends particularly on Giorgione's *Laura* of 1506 (fig. 60). This relationship is even more obvious now that the laurel leaves encircling the nymph's head have been revealed.

Before Longhi assembled his group of putative early Dossos,⁵ this picture was generally regarded as one of the painter's earliest.⁶ Thereafter it was generally assigned to a moment of transition, about 1515–20, between the "Longhi group" and the works of Dosso's maturity, with their more opulent figure types and broader handling.⁷ But with the discovery that the already mature Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6) was painted as

1982–83, pp. 40–41;
Simari in Florence
1986–87, pp. 302–4;
Ballarin in Paris 1993,
p. 321; Ballarin 1994–95,
pp. 302–3; Humfrey and
Lucco 1998, p. 28

early as 1513/14, and the consequent exclusion of the Longhi group from Dosso's oeuvre, it now appears that the older view was closer to the truth. The stylistically archaic character of the woman's hand, whose bony, elongated slenderness still recalls the art of Giovanni Bellini, suggests that the picture was painted in Venice several years before the polyptych and probably not long after Giorgione's *Laura*, perhaps about 1508–9.

From these more recent assessments it may further be deduced that Dosso's true artistic formation took place in Venice (even though Vasari may have been correct in reporting that he served his apprenticeship under Lorenzo Costa in Mantua). Perhaps Dosso was sent to Venice by his early patron Francesco II Gonzaga of Mantua, or by Francesco's wife, Isabella d'Este, to complete his education in the up-to-date artistic environment that centered around Giorgione.

PH

1. Simari in Florence 1986–87.
2. Mosco in Florence 1982–83, p. 40.
3. Ibid., p. 41, n. 21.
4. Described as "einen Satyr und ein Weib, das sich ein Tuch über die Schultern wirft." A. Venturi 1885, p. 12. But Venturi was clearly mistaken in his suggestion that the picture was sent from Prague to Florence only in

- 1792, as part of an exchange that took place at that time.
5. Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., pp. 306–11); Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 80–84).
6. Berenson 1907; Gardner 1911; Mendelsohn 1914;
A. Venturi 1928; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933.
7. Longhi 1934; Gibbons 1968; Ballarin 1994–95.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is poorly preserved; paint loss is extensive, and many areas have been retouched with vertical strokes. Both the nymph and the satyr had eyebrows highlighted by a few single hairs, now barely visible. In the tufts of fur on their garments, single detailed hairs are painted that may have been scumbled with an oil and egg tempera emulsion (a scumble is a layer of opaque paint applied over a dry painted surface). A similar emulsion may have been used for other details, such as the ring around the nymph's neck and the green ribbon. A light area above the nymph's head indicates a pentimento, or change made by the artist that has become visible over the course of time.

2. *Buffoon*

Ca. 1510
Oil on canvas, 23 1/8 x
20 7/8 in. (60.5 x 53 cm)
Galleria Estense,
Modena

Provenance
Probably Cardinal
Alessandro d'Este, Rome
(1624 inv.), or possibly
Roberto Canonici, Ferrara
(before 1631); possibly
Camillo Pamphilj, Rome

Like the *Nymph and Satyr* (cat. no. 1), this arresting, amusing image of a buffoon holding a sheep is probably one of Dosso's earliest surviving works. It remains close to the Pitti picture in its Giorgionesque style and delicacy of handling, and like it is in a very rubbed condition. Of the damaged inscription on the *cartellino* in the foreground, only the unintelligible phrase "Sic Gi[. . .]ius" can be read; scholars have proposed a variety of theories, all of them inconclusive, about what the two or three missing letters were. The canvas may have been trimmed at the edges, although not necessarily to the extent implied by an old copy in which the composition is considerably extended at the top and also to the right.¹

Three works depicting this subject are recorded in early-seventeenth-century inventories.

Since Dosso's painting was certainly part of the Este ducal collection in Modena by 1720, the picture recorded in 1624 as having belonged to Cardinal Alessandro d'Este in Rome and described as "a head of a buffoon on canvas in a black, partly gilded frame"² is the most probable candidate of the three—as A. Venturi suggested.³ That work may well be identical with the more precisely described "half-length figure of a laughing buffoon, with a sheep on his arm" listed in the inventory of Camillo Pamphilj in Rome in 1648.⁴ The third description, included in the 1631 codicil to the will of Roberto Canonici, Ferrara,⁵ is even more detailed and corresponds exactly to Dosso's composition; but the picture it refers to is likely to have been another version or a copy, possibly the copy formerly in the Frezzati collection.



2

(1648); Galleria Ducale, Modena (probably by 1663,⁶ certainly by 1720 inv., no. 174);⁷ Accademia di Belle Arti, Modena (by 1797 inv., no. 174); Galleria Estense, Modena (from 1854)

References

- A. Venturi 1882, pp. 33–34, 313, 399; Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, pp. 270–71; Bertoni 1903, p. 501; Berenson 1907, p. 210; Gardner 1911, p. 152; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 77, 116; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 60–61; Borenius 1923, p. 31; A. Venturi 1928, pp. 941–42; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 154; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 84); Pallucchini 1945, pp. 86–87; Zampetti in Venice 1955, pp. 272–73; Baldass 1961, p. 83; Dreyer 1964–65, p. 27, n. 84; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 56, 97–98; Puppi 1965; Gibbons 1968, pp. 121, 189–90; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 28, 293; Lucco 1996, p. 49; Hochmann 1998; Humfrey 1998b; Humfrey and Lucco 1998, p. 28



Fig. 61. Giorgione, *Portrait of an Old Woman (La Vecchia or Col Tempo)*. Oil on canvas (transferred). Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

Neither the figure type nor the background landscape is typical of the mature Dosso, and presumably for this reason the traditional attribution to him was rejected by Dreyer (1964–65). Most other critics have, more reasonably, seen the painting as an early, Giorgionesque work, and therefore have often linked it with the *Nymph and Satyr* (cat. no. 1); Gibbons (1968) rightly drew attention to the relatively thin, smooth handling of paint in both works. Earlier in this century critics thus tended to date the *Buffoon* to about 1512 or shortly afterward, while those who accepted Longhi's hypothesized group of early works (see biographical essay, p. 6) generally placed it about 1515–20. The principal exception was again Mezzetti (1965a), who dated both this picture and the *Nymph and Satyr* implausibly late.

Ballarin (1994–95), although accepting the "Longhi group" and dating the *Nymph and Satyr* to about 1515, inconsistently but nevertheless convincingly assigned the *Buffoon* an extremely early date, about 1508–10, on the basis of similarities to works by Giorgione. He likened the silhouetting of the tree trunks to that in Giorgione's *Three Philosophers* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) and revived the comparison made by Borenius (1923) between the composition of Dosso's picture and that of one attributed to Giorgione showing a satyr half-length, holding a rabbit, in the seventeenth-century collection of

Andrea Vendramin. Ballarin also compared the buffoon's expressive grimace with those in the *Concert* (Mattioli Collection, Milan) and the *Flute Player* (Galleria Borghese, Rome)—a pair of works whose attribution to Giorgione remains controversial. However, an equally relevant parallel can be seen, as Hochmann (1998) points out, in the *Vecchia* (fig. 61), universally accepted as Giorgione's, where the figure's mouth is similarly open, showing her teeth. Further close points of contact between the *Buffoon* and the work of Giorgione may be observed in the very Venetian landscape background, with its indeterminately picturesque buildings; the use of a basic red-green color scheme, similar to that in Giorgione's *Laura* of 1506 (fig. 60); and the juxtaposition of two heads of contrasting types. Dosso's treatment in this last case, with the head of the grinning buffoon complemented by the almost equally prominent one of a placidly staring sheep, turns the juxtaposition into comedy.

Like the *Nymph and Satyr*, then, the *Buffoon* was probably painted in Venice; perhaps a year or two later, since it appears to draw on slightly later Giorgionesque models. Yet the subject is not a Venetian one. The painting may be compared with an earlier bust-length representation of a buffoon grinning out of the picture at the spectator, Jean Fouquet's portrait of the celebrated jester Gonnella (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), the favorite of Niccolò III d'Este of Ferrara. Buffoons and dwarfs enjoyed a privileged position at the court of Mantua as well as at Ferrara; and the choice of this subject may help to confirm that Dosso's period of study in Venice at the outset of his career was sponsored by the marchese Francesco Gonzaga or his wife, Isabella d'Este (see cat. no. 1).

PH

1. Formerly Anacleto Frezzati collection, Venice; sold at Sotheby & Co., London, April 19, 1967, no. 54. Inscribed "Sic Girinus." Reproduced in Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 2, fig. 236.

2. "Una testa in tela d'un buffone con cornice nera tocca d'oro." Campori 1870, p. 62.

3. A. Venturi 1882, p. 33.

4. "Mezza figurina di un buffone, che ride con una pecora in braccio." See Fredericksen 1998.

5. *Copia del testamento* 1632, p. 78.

6. A ducal inventory of 1663 lists a "Ritratto del Gonella depinto da Dosi con cornice schietta." Bentini and Curti 1993, p. 66.

7. A. Venturi 1882, p. 313.



3

3. *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape*

Strongly Venetian in character and still reflecting Dosso's interest in both Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione, this painting, which probably represents a well-known figure from classical mythology, is likely to be a very early work—done, like the *Nymph and Satyr* (cat. no. 1) and the *Buffoon* (cat. no. 2), before the painter's arrival in Ferrara in 1512/13. The malevolent sorceress Circe sits before a book opened to show a magic pentacle and holds up a tablet inscribed with further spells; she is surrounded by a selection of her many lovers, whom she has ensnared and then transformed into birds, including a spoonbill, and animals. Technical investigation has shown that a lion and another deer originally appeared in the middle

ground on the left but were painted out by Dosso himself (fig. 63). In time the paint turned transparent, and these animals became partially visible again; subsequently they were re-created by a modern restorer, but they were covered over once more during the recent conservation of the picture at the National Gallery of Art.

The classic account of Circe appears in Homer's *Odyssey* (x:135ff.), in which she is described as dwelling in a glade in a wood and her transformed lovers are wolves, lions, and boars. Circe also figures in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (xiv:252ff.) and, more briefly, in Virgil's *Aeneid* (vii:10ff.), in which bears are also mentioned. Because Dosso does not depict most of these animals, and because the

Ca. 1511–12
Oil on canvas, 39 5/8 ×
53 5/8 in. (100.8 ×
136.1 cm)
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.,
Samuel H. Kress
Collection 1943.4.49

Provenance

Probably Duke Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Mantua (1627 inv., no. 253); King Charles I, Nonesuch House and London (1639 inv., no. 20); sold to William Latham (1649–51); William Graham, London (his sale, Christie's, London, April 10, 1886, no. 417, as by Dosso); Robert and Evelyn Benson, London (1886–1927); Duveen Brothers, London and New York (1927–42); Samuel H. Kress, 1943, New York (1943);⁵ National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (from 1943)

References

Benson in London 1894, pp. xxx, 18; Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, p. 283; A. Venturi 1900, p. 33; Phillips 1906, p. 356; Berenson 1907, p. 209; Gardner 1911, pp. 150, 233; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 65–66; L. Venturi 1913, p. 195; Borenus 1914, p. 361; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 32, 64–65; A. Venturi 1928, p. 937; Belzoni 1932, p. 417; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 153; A. Venturi 1933, p. 386; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 84); Buscaroli 1935, pp. 214–15; Hughes 1943, pp. 388–89, 398; Suida 1949, p. 284; Battisti 1962 (1989 ed., pp. 159, 584); Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 413; Dreyer 1964–65, p. 230; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 45–47, 125; Middeldorf 1965, p. 172; Puppi 1965; Gibbons 1968, pp. 122, 215–16; Shapley 1968, p. 73; Calvesi 1969b, p. 170; Shapley 1979, pp. 167–68; D. A. Brown 1981, p. 49; Bull 1990, p. 41; Coccia 1991, pp. 285–86; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 348; Bayer 1998; Fredericksen 1998; Humfrey 1998b



Fig. 62. After Leonardo da Vinci, *Standing Leda*. Formerly Spiridon collection, Rome

enchantress does not carry the long stick mentioned by Homer, some critics¹ have preferred to identify her as Alcina, the Circe-like figure in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (vi:35ff.). But Dosso's animals do not correspond to the array of fantastic monsters described by Ariosto either; and, as pointed out by Gibbons (1968), Alcina transformed her victims into plants, fountains, and rocks as well as into beasts. Rejecting both standard interpretations, Calvesi (1969b) identified the figure as the nymph Canens, who is described in the *Metamorphoses* as "attracting trees and rocks, soothing wild beasts, detaining roving birds, and staying long rivers in their courses" with her beautiful singing (xiv:335); however, this identification fails to account for the tablet and book with magic spells.

In any case, it is probably a mistake to regard the picture as a literal illustration of a particular text; rather, it may be seen as a personal interpretation of the Circe legend in which the painter, no less than the poets, was free to draw on a range of different sources and to introduce variations of his

own. It remains possible, therefore, that he drew inspiration both from the classics and from modern poets: from Ariosto, and from a passage in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, left incomplete at the author's death in 1494, in which the enchanted Orlando gazes at a wall painting depicting the story of Circe (I:IV:50–53). Boiardo mentions both birds and animals and tells how Circe herself became transformed into a white deer. Knowledge of that passage may have led Dosso to borrow the deer at the far right, and also the greyhound below it, from Dürer's engraving *Saint Eustace* of 1501 (fig. 69). As was suggested by D. A. Brown (1981), Dosso, in common with his contemporary Parmigianino, may have considered this visual source particularly appropriate because the Saint Eustace story, which is often connected with Ovid's tale of Actaeon, also contains the implicit theme of a man's metamorphosis into a beast.

In addition to being retold by Renaissance poets, the Circe legend was made the subject of wider philosophical and moralizing interpretation by Renaissance humanists such as Cristoforo Landino, Pico della Mirandola, and Erasmus. According to them, Circe embodied not merely the temptations of the flesh but also a threat to human reason and virtue in general. Dosso's sorceress was explained by Hughes (1943) in the same spirit, as an evil goddess who attempted to divert men from the hard path of virtue and reduce them to the status of irrational beasts. But while the possibility that Dosso and his patron wished to convey a stern moralizing message of this kind cannot be excluded, the pervasive mood of enchanted languor seems designed to delight and bewitch a male spectator more than to admonish him.

The fact that Dosso clearly borrowed two of his animals from Dürer lends weight to the more debatable suggestion of Borenus (1914) that Circe's pose is based on Giulio Campagnola's *Young Shepherd* engraving of about 1509. What has apparently not been pointed out is that her posture derives even more closely from that in Leonardo's no longer extant *Standing Leda* of about 1506 (see fig. 62), which Dosso could have known through various copies and which he may well have considered a suitable model for his own pagan deity. In addition to borrowing these particular motifs, Dosso seems to have adopted a finesse in the execution of foreground details that deliberately imitates fifteenth-century masters such as Pisanello and Giovanni Bellini. A comparable refinement,

perhaps similarly employed for its appeal to a courtly taste, is found, for example, in Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* (fig. 18), which was completed and delivered to Ferrara in 1514 but which Dosso could have seen in progress at Bellini's workshop in Venice two or three years earlier. Dosso's silhouetted tree trunks on the right and the pool of water with tiny pebbles at its edge in the left foreground are almost quotations from Bellini's picture. The romantically forested middle ground and background and the rustic building in the distance, however, are strongly Giorgionesque (detail); they mark the beginning of a series of pictures from Dosso's early maturity in which densely foliated, atmospheric landscape plays an increasingly prominent role. But the still-placid character of this landscape, which lacks the Titianesque dynamism of the background in the Costabili polyptych of 1513, suggests a date slightly earlier, about 1511–12.

Because of its uncharacteristic archaisms and its manifest Giorgionism, *Circe and Her Lovers* was regarded as an early work by its owner Robert Benson (in London 1894) and by virtually all critics writing in the first three decades of this century.² After Longhi introduced his new group of supposed early works in 1934, the picture was generally given a somewhat later date, usually in the early 1520s (Antonelli Trenti 1964; Gibbons 1968). But the awkwardness of this solution was recognized by Mezzetti (1965a), who proposed instead that it was a late work of the early 1530s in which the sensuous naturalism of Dosso's early style had become academic and stylized. Shapley (1979) agreed, pointing to the linear quality and the contrapposto of the figure, both atypical for the early Dosso. Ballarin (1994–95) similarly (but with no explanation) dated the picture relatively late, about 1528, and implicitly attributed its anomalous features to collaboration with Battista. The judgment of all these critics was impeded, however, by extensive overpainting on the picture, and by their acceptance of the no longer universally accepted "Longhi group." Only since the painting's recent lengthy conservation has it been possible to read it properly and to see, for example, the resemblance of its hazy blue horizon to those in other early works such as *The Three Ages of Man* (cat. no. 10) and the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (cat. no. 14). It has been pointed out that the figure's pose is derived with unusual literalness, and with an uncomfortable rigidity, from sources



3, detail

already available by 1510. X-ray photographs show that originally the figure was slimmer, so it remains possible that it was broadened to its present proportions at a later stage, perhaps in the 1520s.

With a date, as is probable, of about 1511–12, *Circe* would have been close in style to the "large



3, detail



Fig. 63. X-radiograph of *Circe and Her Lovers*. Noteworthy are the stag and lion at the left, which were painted out by the artist, and the change in the figure's contours.

picture with eleven figures" completed by Dosso for the palace of Francesco Gonzaga in Mantua in April 1512. Indeed, another good reason for supposing that *Circe* too was painted for the court of Mantua has been provided by recent research on its provenance by Fredericksen (1998), who plausibly suggests that the picture is identical with one in the collection of Charles I of England that came to London when the king purchased the duke of Mantua's entire collection in 1627–28. Described in Charles's inventories as a "Landscape of inchauntm^s of Dorsey" and as "A landshape wth a witch. by dorse de Ferraro," it is listed in the inventory taken in Mantua in 1627–28 as "A landscape with an enchantress who is drawing diagrams on the ground."³ In this connection it is worth pointing out that both Francesco II Gonzaga and his wife, Isabella d'Este, followed the writing of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* with deep interest and were acquainted with its contents well before its publication in 1515.⁴

PH

1. Including Mendelsohn (1914), Suida (1949), Puppi (1965), and Shapley (1979).

2. L. Venturi 1913, Mendelsohn 1914, A. Venturi 1928, Barbantini in Ferrara 1933.

3. "Un Paese con una Maga che sta facendo figure sopra la terra." For the three inventories, see, respectively, Millar 1960, p. 187, n. 20; Millar 1972, p. 194, no. 134; and Luzio 1913, p. 108, no. 253. After Charles's execution the picture

was consigned to one of his creditors, the woolen draper William Latham. The possibility cannot be ignored, however, that this picture was merely a copy of *Melissa* (cat. no. 12).

4. See Catalano 1930, pp. 295–97.

5. For the early provenance, see Fredericksen 1998, and n. 2 above; for the later provenance, see Shapley 1979.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of the painting, which has suffered from vigorous past cleanings, is fair. It was restored in the years 1986–98. The canvas is a plain weave with a slight diagonal pattern; the thread count is 14–16 per centimeter horizontally and 13–15 per centimeter vertically. The imprints of the original strainer, which was not perfectly square, are visible, and range from 4.8 centimeters to 6.2 centimeters on the right edge and from 3 to 5.3 centimeters on the left edge. Thus, little can be missing from the lateral edges, while approximately 3 centimeters are missing from the top and 2 centimeters from the bottom. The orginal vertical reinforcement is quite centrally located.

Numerous pigment analyses have been carried out. The gesso ground is a mixture of gypsum and anhydrite calcium sulfate in animal glue, sealed with a layer of glue. As elsewhere, the preparation is gray-brown and contains oil with lead, charcoal, brown earths, and a high proportion of extenders (pointing to the use of clay, as mentioned by Vasari; see Vasari, 1907 ed., pp. 230–31, and Armenini 1586, p. 125). Circe's green drape is fairly well preserved and consists of four layers of lead white and a copper green pigment, presumably verdigris, which shows traces of fingerprints. Other pigments found were lead-tin yellow, lead white, azurite, iron earths, vermilion, red lake, and black (for these analyses, see Berrie and Fisher 1993 and Berrie 1994).

The x-radiograph (fig. 63) reveals extensive pentimenti: a reclining stag and a lion on the left have been painted out, and there are changes in Circe's face and hands as well as the contours of her body.

Characteristic of Dosso is the detailed execution of the animals and the pebbles in the foreground.

Two Scenes from the Infancy of Christ

4a. *Nativity*

4b. *Adoration of the Magi*

This vividly executed pair of devotional panels, which further illustrate the pervasive dependence on Giorgione of Dosso's earliest works (see cat. nos. 1–3), appear to date from very soon after Dosso settled in Ferrara in late 1512 or early 1513. The *Adoration* is particularly indebted to Giorgione's own early *Adoration of the Magi* (National Gallery, London) in its general composition, exotic costumes, and blocks of intense color; at the same time, the classicizing profile of Dosso's Virgin reflects an interest in the Venetian works of about 1507–11 of Sebastiano del Piombo, while the forceful energy of the figure group may be compared with that in pictures by the young Titian such as *Christ and the Adulteress* in Glasgow (ca. 1510–11). Similarly, the *Nativity* may be interpreted as a stylistically updated variant of Giorgione's Allendale *Nativity* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), in which already the Holy Family was placed in front of a dark cave on the right, winged putto heads hovered above, and the Annunciation to the Shepherds appeared in the landscape background. But now, the same features are presented with far more boldness and drama than they had been by the early Giorgione, and Dosso's angelic apparition is bounded by the extraordinary phenomenon of a rainbow tilted up on its side. The sharp contrast between a dark foil on one side of the composition and a landscape vista on the other, employed in both panels, was a device much favored in those years by both Sebastiano and Titian.

The first record of the panels, together with an attribution to Dosso, is in a manuscript guide to the church of San Francesco in Ferrara dated 1739, "Ragguaglio storico." This mention establishes that at the time the panels formed part of the predella of Garofalo's *Massacre of the Innocents* altarpiece of 1519 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara) that stood in the church's Festini chapel, the fourth on the right. The predella also included at its center a copy after Garofalo's *Circumcision*:¹ "In the lower part of the altarpiece, the Presentation

by the Virgin of her only begotten Son Jesus in the Temple is by the same highly praised master [i.e., Garofalo]; the two panels, one on either side of this, representing the Adoration and a Rest on the Flight into Egypt, are both said to be by Dosso Dossi of Ferrara."² The *Massacre of the Innocents* was surmounted by Garofalo's *Flight into Egypt* lunette, and another *Flight*, in the form of a tondo and today attributed to Ortolano, was placed at the apex. Subsequent eighteenth-century Ferrarese sources³ attributed all six panels to Garofalo, and in 1864, still as the work of Garofalo, they entered the Pinacoteca. It was not until 1945 that Raimondi (in Bologna 1945), with the enthusiastic endorsement in 1946 of Longhi, restored the *Nativity* (at that time called the *Rest on the Flight*) and the *Adoration* to Dosso; and in 1955, Bargellesi, drawing attention to their provenance from San Francesco and their early connection with Garofalo's *Massacre of the Innocents*, deduced that the pair must date from 1519. This conclusion was of particular interest because previously, Dosso's earliest dated work had been the altarpiece installed in Modena Cathedral in 1522 (fig. 1). The dating was accepted by a majority of critics, including Mezzetti (1965a), Puppi (1965), and Gibbons (1968), for whom the twin panels provided a welcome new anchor point in the chronology of Dosso's early career.

However, Dreyer (1964–65) found it impossible to reconcile the 1519 date with his analysis of Dosso's early chronology; he accordingly concluded that the panels were not by Dosso. Romani (in Bentini 1992) and Ballarin (1994–95) came to the same conclusion and attributed them to an anonymous follower. But this solution does not do justice to the imaginative power and pictorial boldness of the two panels, and it seems more reasonable to cast doubt on the date than on the attribution. In fact, the 1739 manuscript records that the altar decoration of the Festini chapel had recently been renovated by a new owner and a grandiose new stone framework and flanking

Ca. 1512–13
Oil on panel, each 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (39 x 54 cm)
Pinacoteca Nazionale,
Ferrara 180, 178

Provenance
Church of San Francesco,
Ferrara (by 1739);
Pinacoteca Nazionale,
Ferrara (from 1864)

References
Barotti, annotations
(1735–67) to Brisighella
ca. 1704–10 (1990 ed.,
p. 297); "Ragguaglio storico" 1739; Barotti 1770,
p. 118; Scalabrin 1773,
p. 183; C. Cittadella
1782–83, vol. 2, p. 18;
Frizzi 1787, p. 114;
Avventi 1838, p. 166;
L. N. Cittadella 1844,
pp. 63–64; Fei 1869,
pp. 28–29; Raimondi in
Bologna 1945, nos. 36, 37;
Longhi 1946 (1978 ed.,
pp. 21–22); Bargellesi
1955, pp. 91–94; Longhi
1956, p. 190; Arslan 1957,
p. 257; Neppi 1959, p. 25;
Antonelli Trenti 1964,
pp. 409–10; Dreyer
1964–65, p. 24; Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 14, 23, 83–84;
Puppi 1965; Berenson
1968, p. 111; Gibbons
1968, pp. 119, 174–75;
Volpe 1974, pp. 23–24;
Mezzetti and Mattaliano



4a

1980–83, vol. 2, p. 56; Volpe 1981 (1982 ed., p. 10); De Marchi 1986, pp. 20, 26; Leone De Castris 1988, p. 7; Fioravanti Baraldi in Bentini 1992, p. 145; Romani in Bentini 1992, p. 125; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 371–72

statues had been added; it may well be that at the same time, as already hypothesized inconclusively by Mezzetti (1965a), Dosso's panels and Ortolano's tondo were added to the Garofalo *Massacre* with its lunette. It should be noted that while the Ferrarese sources Baruffaldi and Brisighella, writing in the early years of the eighteenth century, both record the *Massacre*, neither mentions any predella. The question whether the original of Garofalo's *Circumcision*, which had been acquired for the Canonici collection in Ferrara by 1632,⁴ once formed part of the altarpiece's predella, may be left open here, but for at least two reasons it is unlikely that Dosso's panels were painted to accompany the *Circumcision*. First, the *Circumcision*'s very centralized and architectonic composition implies that from the beginning it constituted the central panel of any predella, while Dosso's much looser compositions would have had to be placed

at the sides; yet such an arrangement contravenes the chronological sequence of the three episodes from Christ's infancy. Secondly and perhaps even more decisively, while the direction of the light in the *Circumcision*—and indeed, in the *Massacre*—is from the right, Dosso's panels are both lit from the upper left. Mezzetti (1965a, p. 84) has also pointed out that the *Circumcision* (originally 34 × 50 centimeters) was somewhat smaller than Dosso's panels.

Thus, although the *Nativity* and the *Adoration* were presumably painted for a Ferrarese patron, their original provenance must be regarded as unknown. Since there is no other altarpiece—either by Dosso or Garofalo—with which they can plausibly be linked, it also follows that they may not have been painted as predella panels at all but rather as a pair of pictures for private devotion. In style they appear to belong to a moment slight-



4b

ly later than the 1511–12 *Circe* (cat. no. 3), for now the animals and foliage are treated more boldly, and the landscape recedes more precipitously; on the other hand, the trees are not yet charged with the tension of those to the right in the background of the 1513 Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6) or in the *Zingarella* of about 1513–14 (cat. no. 7).

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1. Original in Musée du Louvre, Paris.

2. "Dalla parte inferiore dell'ancona dietro la gloria la presentazione fatta da M.V. del Unigenito di lei figliuolo Giesù al tempio ed è opera dello stesso lodatissimo maestro; li due uno al di qua ed uno al di là di questo rappresentano l'Adorazione ed un riposo d'egito, e diconsi essere opera entrambi di Dosso Dossi ferrarese."

Quoted by Mezzetti 1965a, p. 84.

3. Barotti, notes (1735–67) to Brisighella ca. 1704–10; Barotti 1770; Scalabrini 1773; C. Cittadella 1782–83; Frizzi 1787.

4. See Fioravanti Baraldi 1993, pp. 145–46.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

Both paintings and their panels are in very good condition. The paint film is thin but has a rough surface. In the x-radiographs for both works there is, uncharacteristically, very little contrast, and one can barely see the figures.

In the *Nativity*, Saint Joseph's lilac garment is painted over a white substrate, while the red of the Virgin's garment is over a red substrate. In the *Adoration of the Magi*, the reds are painted over a red substrate, except for the Virgin's garment, which is over a white or pink one. The landscape had a copper resinate glaze that turned brown and was subsequently removed.

5. Virgin and Child with Saints Joseph and Francis

*Ca. 1513
Oil on panel, 24 3/4 × 18 7/8 in. (63 × 48 cm)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie*

Provenance

Vincenzo Giustiniani, Rome (1638 inv., no. 70, as by Sebastiano del Piombo);¹ Galerie Giustiniani, Paris (1812, as by Fra Bartolomeo); Berlin Museums (from 1815).³

References

A. Venturi 1896, p. 3; Zwanziger 1911, p. 85; Posse 1913, p. 166; Mendelssohn 1914, pp. 55–57; Longhi 1927b (1967 ed., p. 161); A. Venturi 1928, p. 975; Berenson 1932, p. 404; Salerno 1960, p. 138, no. 70; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 413; Mezzetti 1965a, p. 73; Berenson 1968, p. 308; Gibbons 1968, pp. 118, 166; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 410; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 35–36, 74, 305; Humfrey and Lucco 1998, p. 28

This floridly handsome Madonna, whose regal status is emphasized by the diadem on her forehead and the heavy collar of embossed gold on her crimson robe, is a figure type not entirely typical of Dosso. The picture was attributed variously to Sebastiano del Piombo, Fra Bartolommeo, Camillo Boccaccino, and Sodoma before being convincingly given to Dosso by Wilhelm von Bode in the late nineteenth century;¹ and even then, Berenson (1932, 1968) consistently attributed it to Girolamo del Pacchia of Siena. The most detailed arguments for the picture's date have been put forward by Ballarin, who, stressing the apparent influence of Titian in the physical opulence of the Madonna and the warm richness of the color, suggested that the work was painted in 1516, because Titian is known to have visited Ferrara in the spring of that year. According to this reading, the picture represents a moment of stylistic transition between the early "Longhi group" and mature Dosso paintings of the late teens.

But with the elimination of the Longhi group from Dosso's oeuvre, it seems more reasonable to date the *Virgin and Child with Saints Joseph and Francis* somewhat earlier, especially in view of its stylistic eclecticism and its obvious technical uncertainties, such as the weak drawing of the Virgin's hands. As Gibbons (1968) observed, the vertical, crowded format is unusually archaic for Dosso; Gibbons noted similar compositions by Giovanni Bellini dating from the 1490s, but an even more striking parallel is with the series of late Holy Family pictures by Mantegna, which would have been well known to Dosso from his time at the court of Mantua. This relationship extends to details as well: compare, for example, Dosso's solemn, brooding figure of Joseph with its counterpart in Mantegna's *Holy Family* of about 1485–88 (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth). But quite different from the work of these fifteenth-century masters, and even from the Giorgionesque delicacy that still characterizes the *Circe* of about 1511–12 (cat. no. 3), is the robust modeling of the heads and draperies, as also the use of blobs and ridges of impasto; stylistically, the picture may be placed with Dosso's contribution to the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6), now securely dated to 1513/14. The profile of Saint Francis, for example,

resembles that of the aged Saint Elizabeth at the right edge of the central panel of the polyptych. Moreover, this painting's heroic, plastically defined saints now reflect a direct contact with the art of Raphael, and the Virgin's gold collar in particular is virtually a quotation from Raphael's *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 4) of about 1512. As noted elsewhere, Dosso may have visited Rome in the entourage of Alfonso d'Este in the spring of 1513, and the *Virgin and Child with Saints Joseph and Francis* is likely to have been painted soon afterward, if not, given its Roman provenance, actually during the trip. However, this is not to deny the presence of the various other North Italian influences enumerated by Ballarin: of Romanino, for example, evident in the convolution of the Virgin's draperies; of Amico Aspertini in the unclassical eccentricity of the Saint Francis; or of the early Titian, manifest in the broad triangular composition like that of the *Gypsy Madonna* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) of about 1510.

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1. See Zwanziger 1911.

2. "Un quadro di una Madonna che tiene un Christarello in grembo con S. Fran.^o e S. Giuseppe dalle bande depinto in tavola alto pal. 3 lar. pal. 2, 1/2 di mano si crede di Fra Sebastiano del Piombo con cornice rabescata d'oro." Salerno 1960, p. 138, no. 70.

3. Provenance from Ballarin 1994–95, p. 305.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is good, although the paint surface is somewhat hazy. The red of the Virgin's garment is apparently painted over a modeled white substrate. Atypically, the yellow garment of Saint Joseph is not painted with orpiment. Also uncharacteristically, there are no eyebrows, eyelashes, well-defined fingernails, or red dots to define the eyes. In the microscopic cross section, the paint film is quite thin. The x-radiograph is also atypical: the quick brushstrokes laying out the blouse of the Virgin are indecisive and in sharp contrast with what one sees on the surface, while the two saints, so different in their handling, are barely visible in the x-ray.



DOSSO DOSSI AND BENVENUTO TISI, CALLED GAROFALO

6. The Costabili Polyptych

Virgin and Child Enthroned, with Saints (main panel); Saint Sebastian and Saint George (lower side panels); Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine (spandrels); Resurrected Christ (pinnacle)

*Documented date 1513; probably completed 1514
Oil on panel. Main panel, 174 × 95 1/4 in.
(476 × 242 cm); lower side panels, 96 1/2 ×
41 3/8 in. (245 × 105 cm); spandrels, 63 × 41 ×
82 5/8 in. (160 × 104 × 210 cm); pinnacle, 65 3/4 ×
41 in. (167 × 104 cm)
Pinacoteca Nazionale,
Ferrara 189–194*

*Provenance
Church of Sant'Andrea,
Ferrara; Pinacoteca
Nazionale, Ferrara (from
1846)*

*References
Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 5, p. 411); Guarini 1621, p. 362; Scannelli 1657, p. 316; Borsetti 1670, p. 262; Baruffaldi 1697–1722 (1844–46 ed., vol. 1, pp. 287–88); Brisighella ca. 1704–10 (1990 ed., p. 473); Barotti 1770, pp. 174–75; Scalabrini 1773, pp. 301–2; C. Cittadella 1782–83, vol. 1, p. 141, vol. 4, p. 331; Frizzi 1787, p. 126; Avventi 1838, p. 147; L. N. Cittadella 1844, p. 156; Frizzi 1847–50, vol. 5, p. 360; Burckhardt 1855, p. 892; Münder 1855–58*

This monumental polyptych, executed by Dosso in collaboration with his older Ferrarese colleague Garofalo, was commissioned for the high altar of the Augustinian church of Sant'Andrea in Ferrara by Antonio Costabili, a soldier, diplomat, and leading figure at the court of Duke Alfonso I. The work was previously thought to date from the 1520s or later, but recently discovered documents show that it was in progress during the second half of 1513 and was probably completed early in 1514.¹ This revelation has cast an entirely new light not just on Dosso's early career but on the whole history of Ferrarese painting in the second decade of the sixteenth century, and the Costabili polyptych emerges as one of the most innovative North Italian altarpieces of its time.

The church of Sant'Andrea, which collapsed in 1938 after more than a century of neglect and now survives as a fragmentary ruin, was built under Este patronage from the 1490s onward in a style similar to that of Biagio Rossetti's churches of San Francesco and Santa Maria in Vado. In 1497 the prolific fresco painter Fino Marsigli received payments for decorating its chancel,² and in about 1510 Domenico Panetti provided organ shutters (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara) for the newly completed church.

Probably some time in the 1490s, patronage rights to the high altar and chancel of Sant'Andrea were acquired by Antonio Costabili, whose family palace (subsequently nicknamed Palazzo Lodovico il Moro) stood nearby. In addition to his military and diplomatic activities in the service first of Ercole I and then of Alfonso I, Costabili played a highly influential role in art patronage in Ferrara during the last years of the fifteenth century and the early years of the sixteenth; he was responsible for bringing the Cremonese Boccaccio Boccaccino to the city in 1497 and for promoting the career of the young Garofalo by

giving him an important decorative commission in his newly built palace.³ The styles of both these painters mark a significant break with fifteenth-century Ferrarese tradition as represented by Ercole de' Roberti, and this suggests that Costabili was a man of advanced aesthetic tastes, despite his choosing the obsolescent format of a multi-paneled polyptych for his altarpiece. The choice was probably determined by his wish to commission a work of monumental proportions; the result consists of a central element depicting the Virgin and Child enthroned with saints, its design based on the Venetian type of Sacra Conversazione established in Northern Italy by Giovanni Bellini, supplemented by five additional panels.

The polyptych format permitted the display of a large number of saints. Although not all of these are clearly identifiable, the titular saint of the church, Andrew, is clearly visible in the left foreground; Augustine, patron of the Augustinian order, in the right spandrel is complemented by his fellow fathers of the Church, Ambrose, in the spandrel opposite, and Jerome, in the right foreground. The young John the Evangelist, with the chalice that is his attribute, is seated at the center, at the foot of the Virgin's throne. George is the patron saint of Ferrara and, because of his military nature, of Costabili, making his presence in the right lower panel doubly appropriate. Sebastian, popular as a protector against the plague, was frequently paired with George in North Italian altarpieces from the time of Antonello da Messina's San Cassiano altarpiece of 1475–76 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) onward, because of the aesthetically pleasing contrast between soft, nude flesh and hard, glittering armor. The shadowy and now much damaged figures immediately in front of the wall probably represent, on the right, Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Virgin, and on the left, Elizabeth and Zachariah, the parents of the child



(1985 ed., p. 116); L. N. Cittadella 1870, pp. 18–19; Morelli 1890 (1892 ed., p. 218); Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, pp. 263–64, 283; Burckhardt 1898, p. 29; Berenson 1907, p. 209; Gardner 1911, pp. 158–59, 231; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 74–75; L. Venturi 1913, p. 194; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 104–7; Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., p. 307); A. Venturi 1928, pp. 965–96; A. Venturi 1929, p. 304; Berenson 1932, p. 174; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 171; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 88, 109); Arslan 1957, p. 261; Neppi 1959, p. 36; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 413; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 366–68; Mezzetti in Ferrara 1964, pp. 54–56; Puppi 1964, pp. 29–30; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 30–32, 84–85; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 156; Gibbons 1968, pp. 133, 173–74; Mezzetti and Mattaliano 1980–83, vol. 2, p. 21; Mattaliano in London 1984, p. 80; Pattanaro 1989–90, pp. 130–42; Fioravanti Baraldi in Bentini 1992, pp. 126–28; Fioravanti Baraldi 1993, pp. 180–81; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 415–16; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 89–91, 336–37; Humfrey 1998a, pp. 9–12; Humfrey 1998b; Humfrey and Lucco 1998, pp. 22–27

Baptist (who receives the Virgin's blessing at the center). The image of the resurrected Christ in the apex was a natural, even necessary inclusion in a chapel where the patron—as he specified in his will of 1527⁴—intended to be buried; it expressed his hope for his own resurrection through the merits of his Savior. The two inscriptions displayed by the angels at the apex of the composition, “Devs Fortis” and “Princeps Pacis,” refer to the celebrated messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9:6, “Deus fortis, pater futuri saeculi, princeps pacis” (The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace). Significantly, the Child is shown clutching a royal orb, a symbol of his dominion over the world.

The newly discovered documents shed no light on the reasons for Costabili's choice of format or of saints, nor indeed for his decision to employ two independent painters who apparently had no previous connection with one another. The documentation is minimal: part of a series of payments to Dosso and Garofalo for their work on the altarpiece and for a trip together to Venice to buy colors. The first record of payment, dated July 11, 1513, speaks of the two as having already started work on the panel (“... a panel that they are painting at the high altar of the church of Sant' Andrea in Ferrara”);⁵ and interim payments follow on August 6, November 15, and November 21. The account book for the following year is lost, but the fact that both painters were employed on the project throughout the second half of 1513, and also that both are known to have been engaged on other commissions in 1514, makes it likely that the ensemble was complete or nearly complete by the beginning of that year. This in turn suggests that the patron's principal reason for employing two painters was to have the enormous task completed as quickly as possible.

The involvement of more than one painter created attributional confusion from the beginning. Vasari (1568) ascribed the entire work to Garofalo and made no mention of Dosso in connection with it. Scannelli (1657), on the other hand, called it the work of Dosso, but completed by Garofalo and Girolamo da Carpi. Ferrarese sources of the eighteenth century continued to mention these three names, but by the nineteenth century most reputable authorities gave the work to Dosso alone. The question of Garofalo's and Girolamo's involvement reemerged, however, at the beginning of the twentieth. In 1934 Longhi provided an

unprecedentedly detailed and convincing account of the division of hands, giving the greater part to Dosso but identifying Garofalo's contribution as the figures of Saints Sebastian and Ambrose, the head of the young saint behind Saint Andrew, and the group of angels at the top of the main panel. Longhi proposed more tentatively that Girolamo da Carpi's hand was identifiable in the figure of the child Baptist. Later critics have remained in substantial agreement with Longhi while attempting to refine some of his observations: Mezzetti (1965a), for example, rightly pointed out that the Ambrose must be by Dosso rather than Garofalo; Gibbons (1968), rather less convincingly, thought that the saint behind Jerome was also by Garofalo and the shadowy saints in the third row by Battista. Fioravanti Baraldi (in Bentini 1992) attributed the Ambrose to Girolamo da Carpi, comparing the head to those done by Girolamo in Bologna in 1524–25. But the involvement of both Battista and Girolamo (born ca. 1510) must now be excluded on chronological grounds.

The collaboration with Garofalo has created problems of dating as well as of attribution. While A. Venturi (1928) and Arslan (1957) dated the polyptych to the early 1520s, until relatively recently most critics followed the view of Mendelsohn (1914) that it was a late work of the early 1530s. This view was disproved, however, by Pattanaro (1989–90) when she published Costabili's will of 1527, which showed that by that year the decoration of the altar was already complete. Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) accordingly reverted to the earlier dating, proposing a date of about 1523–25.

Counter to Mezzetti's (1965a) interpretation, Ballarin claimed also that Dosso, the painter whose hand is more apparent in the polyptych, had been responsible for the overall conception and design. This seems unlikely, however, especially with the revelation of the early date and of the fact that Garofalo had been continuously employed by Costabili to decorate his palace over the five years preceding, about 1507–12. While the design of the central panel goes back to fifteenth-century Venetian prototypes, the Virgin's throne is characteristic of local Ferrarese tradition, as represented in particular by Ercole de' Roberti and later by transitional figures such as Lorenzo Costa and Domenico Panetti. The work may also be seen as the natural next step after Garofalo's *Virgin and Child with Saints Martin and Dorothea* (Galleria



6, detail

degli Uffizi, Florence) of about 1505, which already depicts the saints in front of a high wall with an extensive landscape beyond, and the Virgin before a vertical cloth of honor topped by an elaborate baldachin. Later variations on the same formula by Garofalo include his Trottì altarpiece of 1517 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara) and his Saint Sylvester altarpiece of 1524 (Cathedral, Ferrara). None of Dosso's subsequent altarpieces, however, adhere to this formula. The hypothesis that Garofalo, the older and the local master, received the original commission and provided a detailed design for it would also explain why Vasari, who knew him well, gave him credit for the entire work.

Although prior to the recent discovery of the documents no critic had ever proposed a date for the polyptych earlier than about 1522, there is nothing in its style that argues against accepting the evidence of the documents at face value. To restrict the discussion here to Dosso's contribution: the *Saint George* panel and both the spandrels, illuminated by a mysterious twilight, are profoundly Giorgionesque. Especially indebted to Giorgione and perhaps to the famous lost picture described by Vasari⁶ is the figure of Saint George, with the complicated play of reflected light on his armor, his long, romantically tousled hair, and his soulful, yearning glance over his shoulder.

The porthole-like windows behind Ambrose and Augustine are likewise motifs derived from Venetian painting of the years about 1510–13, for instance the first version, revealed by x-rays, of Titian's *Schiavona* (National Gallery, London), or Cariani's so-called *Seduction* (Hermitage, Saint Petersburg). The landscape background to the right (see detail) is generically Giorgionesque, but in its tense energy it also betrays a knowledge of recent works by Titian such as the *Noli me tangere* of about 1512 (National Gallery, London).⁷ Dosso's recent immersion in Venetian pictorial culture does not, however, account for all the stylistic qualities evidenced; at least two figures in the main panel, the cross-legged John the Evangelist and the Jerome, echo the art of the early Roman Raphael, strongly implying that Dosso had already been to Rome and studied the frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura. A number of decorative details around the Madonna—the gold embroidery at her neckline, the golden fringes of her shawl, the gleaming finials of her throne, the huge red suspended tassels—similarly seem to confirm that Dosso had seen recent works by Raphael of about 1511–12, such as the *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 4), the *Madonna of the Chair* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence), and the *Portrait of Pope Julius II* (National Gallery, London).



6, detail

On the combined basis, therefore, of documentary, circumstantial, and visual evidence, the following summary account of the commission and execution of the Costabili polyptych is suggested. As work in the Palazzo Costabili was nearing completion about 1512, the patron turned his attention to the high altar of his intended funerary chapel, Sant'Andrea, and asked his favorite painter, Garofalo, to prepare designs for a monumental altarpiece. Important, time-consuming initial tasks had to be carried out in addition to the actual painting, including the carpentry of the panels and the carving of the frame, with its elaborate fifteenth-century-style decoration *all'antica*. Perhaps to expedite progress on the whole, Costabili sent for Dosso; in April and June of 1512 he is recorded as being in Mantua, but he may have arrived in Ferrara later that year and have begun painting the explicitly Giorgionesque *Saint George*, *Saint Ambrose*, and *Saint Augustine* panels. In March 1513 Duke Alfonso traveled to Rome to attend the

coronation of Pope Leo X, taking the opportunity to discuss with Raphael plans for decorating his favorite private room, the Camerino,⁸ and it is perfectly possible that Dosso accompanied the duke as part of his entourage. As the documents attest, work on the polyptych was pursued in earnest by both Dosso and Garofalo in the second half of 1513; but Garofalo may have withdrawn earlier than Dosso, leaving the newcomer to complete the work and to invest it with its predominantly Dossesque character.

The polyptych remained in its original position in Sant'Andrea, as mentions by Vasari (1568) and by all principal local sources confirm, until 1846, when it was removed, together with its original gilt wood frame, to the Pinacoteca. During World War II the panels were taken down for safekeeping, but the frame remained in the gallery and was badly damaged when the Palazzo dei Diamanti was hit by aerial bombardment in June 1944.

PH

1. Franceschini 1995.
2. Tuohy 1996, pp. 367–68.
3. Pattanaro 1994.
4. Pattanaro 1989–90, pp. 130–42.
5. “Una tavola che depinsono alo altare grande de la chiesa de Santo Andrea in Ferrara.” Franceschini 1995, p. 114.
6. Vasari 1568 (1966–67 ed., vol. 4, p. 46).
7. Humfrey 1998b.
8. Shearman 1987, p. 213.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

A horizontal addition to the top arched section of the central panel, 48 centimeters high, is probably original. The *Saint George* panel on the right has horizontal additions at top and bottom that may be later; if they are, this panel was about 30 centimeters shorter than the *Saint Sebastian* panel on the left. One might speculate that the *Saint George* was adapted for this altarpiece by Dosso himself and is

the earliest piece of it. That would explain the extremely soft, Giorgionesque handling of the paint, especially the *sfumato* of the face.

In the figure of Saint Jerome to the right one can best study the layering of paint found so often in Dosso's work. First, on top of the ground, is a dark gray preparation; over this Dosso painted white lead highlights and then laid on the blue of the robe.

Some pentimenti in the work are visible with the naked eye; for instance, the two tassels hanging down from the sky originally had a slightly different form and may show corrections made by Dosso over the ones painted by Garofalo. (For a discussion of pentimenti visible in the x-ray, see Jadranka Bentini's essay above, pp. 68–69.)

The only marked technical feature never found in later paintings is fine cross-hatching, which is particularly visible on Saint Jerome's leg and on the face of the pondering saint behind him.

The landscape on both sides (see detail) is by Dosso and is fully developed in this early painting.

7. *Virgin and Child*, also called *La Zingarella (The Gypsy)*

This little panel, with its relatively small, loosely executed figures set into a densely atmospheric landscape, is probably the earliest of a series of domestically scaled religious works datable to Dosso's early maturity (e.g., cat. no. 14) and clearly inspired by landscapes of Giorgione such as the *Tempest* in the Venice Accademia (fig. 3). The picture, nicknamed *La Zingarella* because of the picturesque, gypsylike appearance of the Virgin, has in the past sometimes been attributed to Battista, notably by Berenson (1932, 1968) and Gibbons (1968), who claimed that the figures' anatomies are too little articulated to be by Dosso. But the figures do not closely resemble those in comparable works that can be accepted as Battista's, such as the early *Holy Family with a Shepherd* in Cleveland (fig. 64); and in a panel of this size Dosso was evidently more interested in evoking a poetic landscape, with its dense, lush foliage and sudden burst of illumination on the right and its vista wrapped in veils of mist on the

left, than in giving clear anatomical articulation to the figures.

Longhi (1940), who first insisted on an attribution to Dosso, dated the picture to about 1520–25, a dating that won general acceptance, including that of Gibbons. But Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), rightly emphasizing the Giorgionesque character of the fugitive light effects and broken color planes, proposed the earlier date of about 1515–16—that is, immediately preceding Titian's first visit to Ferrara in the spring of 1516 and Dosso's accompanying development of a more richly chromatic palette. Indeed, comparison with the landscape background of the Costabili polyptych of 1513–14 (cat. no. 6), similarly free in execution and with impastoed highlights, suggests that the *Zingarella* may be even earlier than Ballarin supposed; and a date of about 1513, soon after the putative trip to Rome, would also account for the subtle allusions to Raphael's *Alba Madonna* (fig. 5) in the arrangement of the

*Ca. 1513–14
Oil on panel, 19 3/4 × 13 3/8 in. (50.1 × 34 cm)
Galleria Nazionale di Parma*

Provenance
Dalla Rosa Prati collection,
Parma (1851 inv., no. 95,
as by Rondani);¹ Galleria
Nazionale, Parma (from
1851)

References

- Ricci 1896, p. 66; Berenson 1932, p. 173; Quintavalle 1939, pp. 92–93; Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., p. 159); Arslan 1957, p. 259; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 410; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 366, 374; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 16, 107; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 115; Gibbons 1968, pp. 125, 231; Trevisani in Rovigo 1984, p. 158; Leone De Castris 1988, p. 7; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 409; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 303–4; Humfrey and Lucco 1998, p. 29



Fig. 64. Battista Dossi, *Holy Family with a Shepherd*. Oil on canvas. The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1998, Delia E. and L. E. Holden Funds, 1949.185

Virgin's legs and to his *Madonna of Loreto* (Musée Condé, Chantilly) in the motif of the raised veil.

In another version of the same composition, now in Detroit (fig. 65), the Virgin and Child are accompanied by Joseph, and behind them are two marble columns and a rustic shed. The removal of overpaint from the work in 1994 revealed that the depiction of the Virgin's face is severely abraded; but the high quality of work in the better-preserved areas, such as Joseph's face and beard, suggests that while an assistant (not necessarily Battista) may have been responsible for the architectural background, Dosso, once again, played the leading role in the execution of the painting. The Detroit version appears to date from slightly later than the *Zingarella*, perhaps about 1515–16.

PH

1. Quintavalle 1939.



Fig. 65. Dosso Dossi, *Holy Family*. Oil on canvas. The Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. Raymond Field

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is in good condition, although somewhat abraded. The wood grain of the panel runs vertically; the panel has its original crossbars. The preparation of the top third of the composition is streaky white and that of the remainder black or dark gray. Since some colors, and especially the whites, have become transparent, the black preparation is now quite visible—for example, beneath the Christ child. There are fingerprints on the red of the Madonna's cloak, and there are light signs of fingerprints over the whole surface.



8. Saint George

*Ca. 1513–14
Oil on panel, 27½ ×
24 in. (70 × 61 cm)
Derek Johns, Ltd.*

Provenance

Sale, Versailles (March 29, 1969, lot 238, as school of Giorgione); private collection, New York (by 1975); sale, Sotheby's, London (November 1, 1978, lot 22); Harari and Johns, London (1991); sale, Christie's, New York (January 1996, lot 189)

References

Mezzetti 1975;
Roethlisberger in London 1991, no. 5; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 416; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 333; Humfrey and Lucco 1998, pp. 28–29

Since its publication by Mezzetti in 1975, this dramatically looming image of Saint George, patron saint of Ferrara, has always been seen as one of a pair with the beautiful but badly damaged *Saint John the Baptist* in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence (fig. 66). The two saints are both shown half length on panels of approximately the same dimensions, and both engage the spectator's attention with their intense outward gaze. Although there is no obvious reason for pairing the two figures, Dosso treats them as complementary variations on a theme; thus, Mezzetti may not have been correct to infer that they once formed part of an extensive series of half-length saints. It is not uncommon for Saint George to be shown with the dragon's head as a trophy, but it is much less usual to place that head prominently in the immediate foreground, as it is here, and to show the saint's lance as shattered. These details, combined with the rainbow amid storm clouds at the top right and the expression of deep emotion on the saint's face, convey the sense that he has just emerged from darkness and danger into light and victory.



Fig. 66. Dosso Dossi, *Saint John the Baptist*. Oil on canvas. Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Galleria Palatina

In a background vignette of the Baptist panel the baptism of Christ is shown taking place, and it is reasonable to wonder whether, similarly, Saint George could originally be seen slaying the dragon in the left background of this panel. But, although the picture surface is clearly abraded in that area, the landscape was probably always intended to be vague and suggestive, as if swathed in mist.

Each of the panels was independently associated with Giorgione before being universally accepted as by Dosso; and indeed, the two saints, with their half-open mouths and long, disheveled hair, are both strongly Giorgionesque in character, as are the fiery colors and romantically evocative, fitfully illuminated landscapes. Roethlisberger (in London 1991) relevantly compared the *Saint George* with Giorgione's fragmentary *Self-Portrait* (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig); both are psychologically profound, and in both the figure emerges from deep shadow into brilliant light. On the basis of the physiognomic similarities of the two saints to the yearning figure of the Baptist in Dosso's altarpiece for Modena Cathedral, dated 1521 (fig. 1), the saint panels were dated by Mezzetti to the early 1520s, a dating followed by Roethlisberger and Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95). Yet the Giorgionism of the two saints is much more pronounced than that in the altarpiece, and a much earlier date, perhaps about 1513–14, is implied by their stylistic resemblance to the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6), likewise dated by Ballarin to the earlier 1520s but now shown to have been painted in 1513–14. Both saints are close in type to the *Resurrected Christ* of the polyptych, and Saint George resembles the standing saint with his hand across his chin in the polyptych, while the rapidly executed, windswept foliage behind the Baptist may be compared with that in the central *Madonna and Saints* panel. Indeed, while emphasizing the Giorgionesque character of the *Saint George*, Ballarin pointed to the rainbow's likely derivation from Raphael's *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 4), which Dosso apparently studied closely during the visit he probably made to Rome immediately before undertaking the Costabili polyptych.

PH



8

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The preparation is dark gray beneath the lower part of the painting and dark brown under the foliage at the right. Among numerous changes visible to the eye, the snout of the dragon was shortened and the

neckline of the armor changed. Underdrawing is suggested by some black painted lines showing through the yellow sleeves, as well as by horizontal lines and shading under the hand of the saint.

9. *Virgin and Child with a Bishop Saint, an Angel, and a Donor*

Ca. 1514
Oil on panel, 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ ×
13 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (41.7 × 34.4 cm)
Szépművészeti
Múzeum, Budapest

Provenance
Baron Paul Luzzénsky (by
1855), as by Perugino;
Gabriel von Térey,
Budapest; Bernhard von
Back-Szeged (by 1913); his
bequest to the
Szépművészeti Múzeum,
Budapest¹

References
Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 53–55;
Térey 1916, pp. 135–36;
A. Venturi 1928, pp. 937, n. 1,
975; Berenson 1932, p. 173;
Longhi 1940 (1956 ed.,
p. 159); Arslan 1957, p. 258;
Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 410;
Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 230,
372, p. 24 (1965); Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 17, 75; Puppi 1965;
Berenson 1968, p. 110;
Gibbons 1968, pp. 116, 168;
Pigler 1968, p. 194; Freedberg
1971 (1975 ed., p. 316); Tátrai
1991, p. 35; Ballarin in Paris
1993, p. 409; Ballarin
1994–95, pp. 74, 305

This little picture combines the grandeur of large-scale altarpieces representing the Virgin and Child enthroned with saints with the intimacy and informality appropriate to a small-scale image for private devotion. The severely classical architectural backdrop is borrowed from altar painting and is unusual for Dosso's pictures of this type, which are more typically set in landscapes; however, the architecture is asymmetrical, and the formal arrangement is further loosened by the placement of the figures toward the right. The brushwork is correspondingly lively and spontaneous, while the intense reds and golds have an incandescent quality, glowing like hot coals against the surrounding darkness.

The female figure kneeling at the right must be a donor rather than a saint, since she has no halo. Her green dress, however, is curiously classicized and does not correspond to any contemporaneous fashion.

The picture has always been seen as an early or relatively early work, but about the exact dating there has been considerable disagreement. Mendelsohn (1914) dated it close to the beginning of Dosso's career, about 1512–15, but subsequent critics, including Longhi (1940), Arslan (1957), and Mezzetti (1965a), put it somewhat later, about 1519–22, postdating not just the "Longhi group" but also two predella panels representing the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi (cat. no. 4), then thought to date to 1519. Gibbons (1968) returned to a very early date, about 1510, on the grounds that the execution appeared tentative

and the draftsmanship poor, even though he accepted the Longhi group and the dating of the Ferrara predella. Rejecting the predella but retaining the Longhi group, Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) dated the Budapest panel to about 1516: slightly later than the more purely Giorgionesque *Zingarella* (cat. no. 7), which the author dated to about 1515–16, and coinciding instead with Titian's visit to Ferrara in early 1516.

But while the panel's vigorous handling and intensity of color indeed recall Titian, the same may be said of Dosso's contribution to the Costabili polyptych of 1513–14 (cat. no. 6); in fact, the Budapest panel appears quite close to the polyptych in its loose brushwork and liberal use of impastoed highlights. Another argument for the early date originally proposed by Mendelsohn is the resemblance between the angel's collar and that worn by the Madonna in the Berlin painting of about 1513 (cat. no. 5), a work Ballarin called close to the Budapest panel. Additionally, the style of the donor's hair was beginning to go out of fashion by about 1515. But the articulation of forms, which is undeniably perfunctory, and the odd disparities of scale do not result from the painter's youthful inexperience; instead they indicate that, especially in a work on this intimate scale, his highest priority is achieving a vivid pictorial effect and using light and color in poetically evocative ways.

PH

1. Information on provenance from Pigler 1968.



10. *The Three Ages of Man*

Ca. 1514–15
Oil on canvas, 30½ × 44 in. (77.5 × 111.8 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Maria DeWitt Jesup Fund, 1926 26.83

Provenance
L. Bernasconi, Milan (1909); Ehrich Galleries, New York (1909–18); possibly Edward Hutton, London (from 1918); Osvald Sirén, Stockholm (by 1925); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchase, Maria DeWitt Jesup Fund (1926)⁵

References
Bernath 1914–15, pl. 91; Mendelsohn 1914, p. 72; Mason Perkins 1915, pp. 123–25; A. Venturi 1925, p. 108; Burroughs 1926, pp. 152–53; Longhi 1927b (1967 ed., p. 160);

This painting is of remarkable conceptual originality. The tall bushy trees and dense undergrowth, of a type previously seen in the *Zingarella* (cat. no. 7), have here become even more dominant. And the pair of lovers on the left, who to judge from their fashionable and expensive costumes are really courtiers only playing at being goatherds, seem nevertheless, because of their small scale, natural inhabitants of the luxuriantly untamed landscape. Similarly merging into the surroundings are the two children half-visible behind a rock and the two sketchily depicted men engaged in conversation in the background. Observing the small scale of the figures relative to the landscape, which is comparable to that in background compositions of other works by Dosso such as *Melissa* (cat. no. 12), Tietze-Conrat (1948) concluded that the New York picture is a fragment cut from a larger canvas. But technical investigation has shown that while the picture was somewhat trimmed at the right and probably at the top, most of the composition remains. In other words, Dosso has here expanded the landscape elements that appear in the backgrounds of religious works such as the *Zingarella* to create what is essentially a landscape picture.

The significance of the three pairs of figures has been the subject of debate. They do not appear sufficiently specific to be identified with characters from literature or classical mythology, but the suggestion made by A. Venturi (1925) that they are

allegorical, referring to the three ages of man, has won wide acceptance. Venturi noted that Titian's *Three Ages of Man* of about 1513–15 (fig. 67) similarly included rustic lovers on the left, a pair of children on the right, and a reference to old age in the background; and, certainly, the contrast in the ages of Dosso's three groups does imply a reference to the passage of time from childhood to early maturity to old age. On the other hand, whereas Titian's large-scale figures naturally inspire philosophical musings by the viewer on the passing of time and the transience of love and beauty, Dosso's small figures seem to be mere incidents in a much more assertive landscape. Further, while it is possible to identify Titian's sleeping infants as younger versions of the lovers and the old man with the pair of skulls as a reference to their ultimate fate, in Dosso's painting both children appear to be boys and both background figures are men, reducing any effect of temporal progression. Indeed, x-ray photographs show that the two men are painted on top of the vegetation and represent additions to the original composition. It is clear that the children belong to the same moment as the lovers, since they are mischievously engaged in spying on them. With the flock of goats nudging toward them on the left, the lovers are positively surrounded by interested spectators, and this note of humor further enhances the genre-like character of the scene.

Berenson (1932) was probably right, therefore, to prefer the more general title *Rustic Idyll* to the allegorical *Three Ages of Man*. In representing small-scale, picturesque, or enigmatically unidentifiable figures within a landscape, Dosso was following the lead of Giorgione in pictures such as the *Sunset Landscape* (National Gallery, London), or of Giorgione's follower Giulio Campagnola in drawings such as the *Two Men on the Edge of a Wood* (Musée du Louvre, Paris). At the same time, Dosso's handling, energetic and more abbreviated than that of Giorgione or Giulio, is clearly indebted to Titian's work of about 1511–13 and probably also to prints imported from Germany, especially those of Albrecht Altdorfer. As pointed out by Bayer (1998), the particular motif of Dosso's lovers has a telling precedent in Titian's early pen-and-ink drawing *A Group of Houses with Lovers* (Chatsworth, Derbyshire). Ballarin¹ compared the



Fig. 67. Titian, *The Three Ages of Man*. Oil on canvas. The National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, Duke of Sutherland Loan, 1945



10

same detail with Altdorfer's drawing *Lovers in a Cornfield* of 1508 (Öffentliche Kunstsammlungen, Basel); although Dosso is unlikely to have known that particular drawing, Altdorfer's widely diffused woodcut *Lovers in a Forest* of 1511 (fig. 68) is an equally relevant precedent for the representation of a genre-like amorous encounter at the foot of vigorously thrusting trees in thickly wooded surroundings.

In developing a type of near-autonomous landscape painting, exemplified by this work and the probably closely contemporary *Travelers in a Wood* (cat. no. 11), Dosso was most likely aware of the theoretical justification for landscape painting provided in Pliny's account of the ancient Roman landscape painter Studius.² But it is noteworthy that Mario Equicola's program for the decoration of Duke Alfonso's Camerino, probably devised about 1511,³ included at least three subjects drawn

from another basic source of information on painting in classical antiquity, the *Imagines* of Philostratus. Two decades later, Dosso's *Hercules and the Pygmies* (cat. no. 40) also drew on this source. Thus, it seems entirely possible that Ferrarese court humanists encouraged Dosso to re-create the antique genre of landscape painting for his ducal master. Furthermore, when Paolo Giovio, the historian and biographer of Alfonso, included a paragraph on Dosso's landscapes in his *Elogium* of Raphael (1546), he discussed them in terms closely based on Pliny's discussion of Studius.⁴ Giovio makes a clear distinction between Dosso's subject pictures, or "proper works" (*justis operibus*), and his landscapes, which he calls *parerga*—that is to say, embellishments, intended simply to delight the eye and refresh the spirit without implying any more serious message (singular, *parergon*). Nothing is known for certain about the original

A. Venturi 1928, pp. 966–67, 977; Berenson 1932, p. 175; Buscaroli 1935, p. 215; Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., p. 159); Lasareff 1941, pp. 131, 135; Tietze-Conrat 1948; Gilbert 1952, p. 205; Arslan 1957, p. 260; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 410; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 365, 371, p. 24 (1965); Puppi 1964, p. 33; Gibbons 1965, p. 495; Gibbons and Puppi 1965, pp. 315–16; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 23, 104; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 123, 244–45; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 316); Hoffman 1984, p. 239;

Dundas 1985, pp. 39–40; Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, p. 112; Zeri and Gardner 1986, pp. 11–12; Rosand in Washington 1988–89, p. 53; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 407–10; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 40, 69, 310–11; Faietti 1994, pp. 32–33; Romani 1996, p. 95; Bayer 1998; Humfrey 1998b



Fig. 68. Albrecht Altdorfer, *Lovers in a Forest*. Woodcut (Hollstein 88). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1950 (50.592)

placement of *parerga* such as *The Three Ages of Man*; presumably, like the later Aeneas frieze (cat. no. 24), it was not painted for close inspection but was placed high on the wall, below the cornice. With its image of pleasant pastoral dalliance, the picture may in any case be thought of as existing in the same relationship to Dosso's larger-scale religious works or secular allegories as life in Alfonso's *delizie*, or country villas, did to that in the ducal palace, with its formal courtly ritual.

There is general agreement that this picture is a relatively early work by Dosso, but, although Burroughs (1926) perceptively judged it to have been painted "within a few years after Giorgione's short lifetime," subsequently it has always been seen as postdating Titian's *Three Ages of Man*. Most critics have also agreed with Longhi (1940) in placing it around 1520 and in regarding it as a moment of radical experiment, daringly free in brushwork and loose in composition, falling between the group Longhi dated to the mid-teens (see p. 6, cat. no. 56) and works of the early twenties, which he thought reflected a new call to order. However, the same bold treatment of foliage with thick dabs of paint and of tree trunks equally dynamic is already evident in the right background of the Costabili polyptych (detail, cat.

no. 6), now shown to date from 1513; and *The Three Ages of Man* may accordingly be dated slightly earlier even than the date of about 1516 proposed by Mendelsohn (1914). Already by the second half of the second decade, in works such as *Melissa* (cat. no. 12) and the Vienna *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 20), Dosso had introduced a new sense of structure into his landscapes—not yet apparent in the present painting—while retaining the effects of fecund nature and vibrating light. If it was indeed painted about 1514, this New York picture was closely contemporary with or even slightly earlier than Titian's *Three Ages of Man*.

PH

1. Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 2, figs. 481, 482.

2. *Natural History*, XXXV:116–17.

3. Shearman 1987, p. 213.

4. Gombrich 1953, p. 346 (1966 ed., pp. 113–14). For the original Latin text, see Meregazzi 1972, p. 232. As pointed out by Zimmermann 1995, p. 49, Giovio would have seen Dosso's work on the occasion of his brief visit to Ferrara in November 1522.

5. Provenance from Zeri and Gardner 1986.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is in very good condition, although there are some losses near the bottom edge. The thread count of the plain weave linen canvas is 13 per centimeter horizontally and 14–16 per centimeter vertically. Since there has been some debate over whether this painting is fragmentary, the edges were carefully examined. At the left are the signs of a strainer 4.5 centimeters from the edge and also 1.3 centimeters of canvas folded over (with the remains of original paint), indicating that this edge is certainly original. At the bottom there is pronounced cusping and a faint strainer mark 4 centimeters from the edge. There are remnants of paint on the folded-over canvas edge on the right, and there is some cusping. However, the imprint of a vertical center bar can be observed, 8 centimeters closer to the right edge rather than centered, indicating that about 8 centimeters are lost at the right of the painting. The top edge is folded over and carries remnants of paint, and the tops of the trees are cropped. Thus it is very likely that the painting was originally larger, but what remains is most of the picture and is definitely not a fragment.

The sky was first painted with lead white, leaving the core of the trees in reserve. The green of the leafy fronds is painted over a lead-tin yellow substrate. The x-radiograph shows minor but interesting changes. The trees were somewhat enlarged in the final stage; a smaller tree in the cluster of trees at right was painted directly over the sky, although the pigment used, possibly copper resinate, has become transparent. The build-

ings in the landscape were originally meant to be more prominent, and the church steeple had a window. The two amorous figures are painted over a bush, while the goat lying down on the left was originally partly covered by grass.

(I am grateful to the Paintings Conservation department of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in particular to Charlotte Hale, for assistance in viewing the painting.)



II

II. *Travelers in a Wood*

This picture, originally a roundel, presumably formed part of one of the numerous decorative ensembles that Dosso must have provided for the castle and for the many Este villas. Its now-lost companion scenes may have provided some hint

about the identity of the travelers and the nature of their journey, but any such hint is unlikely to have been very specific. As Gilbert (1952) first emphasized, this work, like the so-called *Three Ages of Man* (cat. no. 10), exemplifies the genre that

Ca. 1514–15
Oil on canvas laid on wood, $18\frac{1}{8} \times 17\frac{7}{8}$ in.
(46.2×45.5 cm)
Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon

Provenance
Jean Gigoux, Paris, as by Giorgione (until 1894); his bequest to the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon (1894)

References
Magnin 1919, p. 70;
Longhi 1927b (1967 ed., p. 160); A. Venturi 1928, p. 975; Berenson 1932, p. 127; Buscaroli 1935, p. 216; Gilbert 1952, pp. 204–5; Arslan 1957, p. 260; Berenson 1957, p. 54; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 410; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 365–66, 373,

p. 24 (1965); Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 17, 74; Paris 1965–66, pp. 89–90; Puppi 1965; Gibbons 1968, pp. 123, 167; Pallucchini and Rossi 1983, pp. 276–77; Pinette and Soulier-François 1992, p. 34; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 311; Faietti 1994, pp. 32–33; Humfrey 1998b

in 1527 Paolo Giovio called *parergon*. In effect, what had traditionally been a subsidiary or background element—the landscape and its anonymous inhabitants—has become the subject. Therefore, this painting does not seek to convey any story or message; it is intended simply to delight the viewer's aesthetic sense by offering a poetic, evocative glimpse of travelers crossing a sunlit clearing in a dense forest.

Previously and not inappropriately thought to be by Giorgione, the picture was first attributed to

Dosso by Longhi (1927b); an alternative attribution to Giovanni Cariani by Berenson (1932, 1957) has understandably found little support. Critical opinion has also been near unanimous in agreeing with Longhi that the work, like *The Three Ages of Man*, dates from about 1520. However, the recently established date of 1513 for the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6), which has similarly impressionistic foliage in the background landscape, suggests that the dating for both *parerga* should be moved back by several years.

PH

12. *Melissa*, also called *Circe*

Ca. 1515–16
Oil on canvas, 69 1/4 × 68 1/2 in. (176 × 174 cm)
Galleria Borghese,
Rome 217

Provenance
Villa Borghese, Rome (by 1650); by inheritance to Giovanni Battista Borghese (1693 inv., no. 451); Quadreria Borghese, Palazzo Borghese in Campo Marzio, Rome (ca. 1790 inv., room 9, no. 16)

References
Manilli 1650, p. 82;
Baruffaldi 1697–1722 (1844–46 ed., vol. 1, p. 284); Frizzi 1847–50, vol. 5, pp. 361–62;
Burckhardt 1855, p. 893;
Morelli 1890 (1892 ed., pp. 204, 214–15; 1991 ed., p. 225); A. Venturi 1891, p. 427; A. Venturi 1893, p. 127; Gruyer 1897, vol. 1, p. 410, vol. 2, pp. 261, 274, 286; Schlosser 1900,

In perhaps no other work are Dosso's particular qualities as a painter displayed to such magnificent advantage as they are here. The warm color and sensuous richness of the enchantress's costume are obviously indebted to Dosso's close study of the art of Giorgione and Titian; so, too, is the dreamlike landscape, both for its lush fertility and for its role as an expressive complement to the foreground. But typical of Dosso and rather un-Venetian is a strong element of fantasy, evident in the outlandish orientalism of the costume and in the little captive figures pictured at the top left corner. A restless glitter on the rich fabrics in the foreground and fugitive effects of light and shade in the landscape are also features alien to the serene classicism of the early Titian. With its mood of exotic and magical romance, the picture comes very close to the spirit of the poet Ariosto, as was pointed out by Burckhardt in 1855. The illegible cabalistic inscriptions in the foreground are pure invention.

Nothing certain is known of the painting's origin; it is first recorded in Manilli's 1650 guide to the Villa Borghese, but the assumption is often reasonably made, particularly because of the work's exceptional quality, that it was painted for Duke Alfonso and was acquired from the Este castle after 1598 by one of the various Roman prelates who vied with one another for examples of Dosso's work.¹ Manilli calls the subject "a sorceress casting spells,"² and it is described in somewhat greater detail in the inventory taken by Giovanni Battista Borghese in 1693: "A large canvas show-

ing a woman dressed as a sorceress and lighting a torch from a fire, with a dog and other seated figures."³ The inventory made about 1790 of the Borghese collection at Campo Marzio records the picture simply as "la Maga Circe."⁴

That identification of the figure as Circe, the sorceress of antique legend who transformed her many lovers into beasts (see cat. no. 3), remained unchallenged until 1900, when Schlosser, in an article on Dosso and the contemporaneous poet Ariosto, reidentified her as Melissa, the benign enchantress in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. According to the poem (viii:14–15), Melissa rescued Christian and Saracen knights from the palace of the evil Alcina, where they had been transformed into plants, stones, and animals, and restored their weapons to them; this would account for the dog, birds, and armor in the left foreground, and also for the curious little figures apparently strapped to trees, suggesting a state of partial metamorphosis (detail). Gibbons (1968) further suggested that the soldiers in the middle ground are a group of knights who have been rescued and that the structure beyond them represents Alcina's castle. Elsewhere in the poem, Melissa is described as "a damsel of gracious countenance/who must have been of no mean station to judge by her beauty and by the richness of her attire" (ii:72–73), and she is associated with flaming torches and astrological signs (iii:12).⁵ Melissa may also have held a special interest for Duke Alfonso, since it was she who foretold that from Ariosto's hero and heroine



12

Ruggieri and Bradamante the glorious dynasty of the Este would descend (II:27). Most critics, including Mendelsohn (1914), Dreyer (1964–65), and Gibbons (1968), have accepted Schlosser's identification; a significant minority, however, including Berenson (1932), Hughes (1943), Mezzetti (1965a), Puppi (1965), and Calvesi (1969b), have continued to call the subject Circe. Hughes based his preference on Circe's greater prominence as a

literary and philosophical figure in the Renaissance, when she was seen as symbolizing the constant threat to men's virtue and reason (see cat. no. 3). Against this position it may be argued that Dosso's picture is more poetic than moralizing and also that it contains fewer specific references to Circe than to Melissa. Furthermore, in 1516, the year that *Orlando Furioso* was published and the date proposed here on

pp. 268–69; A. Venturi 1900, p. 33; Berenson 1901, pp. 31–32; Berenson 1907, p. 210; Gardner 1911, pp. 151–52, 160, 232; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 57–58; L. Venturi 1913, pp. 192–93; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 33, 67–69; Longhi 1927a (1967 ed.,

p. 311); A. Venturi 1928, pp. 939–40; Belzoni 1932, pp. 417–19; Berenson 1932, p. 175; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 160; A. Venturi 1933, p. 386; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 86, 120); Buscaroli 1935, p. 215; Bodmer 1943, p. XXXVIII; Hughes 1943, pp. 388–89; Della Pergola 1955, p. 31; Arslan 1957, pp. 260–61; Baldass 1961, p. 83; Battisti 1962 (1989 ed., pp. 159–60, 584); Longhi 1963, p. 59; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 406; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 364–65, 373; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 24–25, 112; Puppi 1965; Turner 1966, pp. 134–35; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, pp. 121–22, 198–200; Calvesi 1969b, p. 171; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 318); D. A. Brown 1981, p. 49; Coccia 1991, p. 285; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 406–8, 411; Calvesi 1993, pp. 68–69; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 40, 65, 69–70, 72, 79, 312; Coliva 1994, p. 116; Romani 1996, pp. 99–100



12, detail

stylistic grounds for the execution of the painting, *Melissa*, rather than *Circe*, would have been uppermost in the minds of members of the Ferrarese court. But the identification as *Melissa* is still based on an unverified assumption: that the picture constitutes an illustration of Ariosto's text. It would be safest of all to call the figure an anonymous enchantress, inspired by the fabulous world

conjured up by Ariosto but ultimately emanating from Dosso's own, scarcely less poetic imagination.

The picture has always been accepted as a relatively early work and has never been dated after about 1523. Before Longhi (1927a, 1934) created his putative early group, it was dated about 1516 (Morelli 1890; Mendelsohn 1914); thereafter it was generally placed somewhat later, within a year or two of 1520. But the painting's close stylistic kinship to Dosso's works of the first half of the second decade and, beyond them, to classic works by Giorgione such as the *Tempest* (fig. 3), suggests that the earlier critics were nearer the truth. D. A. Brown (1981) pointed out that, as in *Circe* of about 1511–12 (cat. no. 3), the dog seen here is inspired by one in Dürer's *Saint Eustace* engraving (fig. 69); and the soldiers in the middle ground, with their broad plumed hats, reflect the same interest in German prints depicting lansquenets that Dosso's *Standard Bearer* of about 1515–16 does (cat. no. 13). It is true that compared with landscapes in the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6) and *The Three Ages of Man* (cat. no. 10), the one in *Melissa* displays a new firmness of structure; and in facial type the enchantress resembles the clothed woman in Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love* of about 1514–15 (Galleria Borghese, Rome), confirming that Dosso's picture is unlikely to have been painted before that date. The facial similarity, combined with the Titianesque opulence of the color, may reflect the painter's renewed contact with Titian in early 1516, when Dosso's visit to Venice was quick-



12, detail

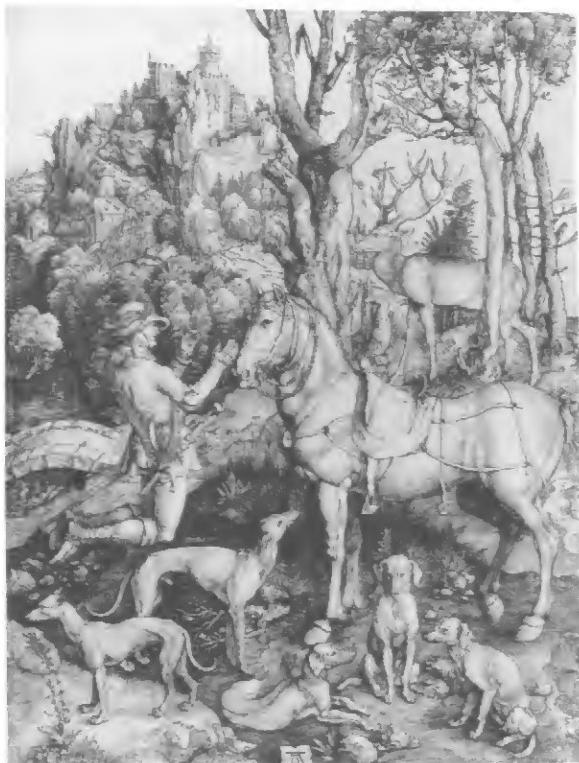


Fig. 69. Albrecht Dürer, *Saint Eustace*. Engraving (Hollstein 60). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1919 (19.73.65)

ly followed by Titian's visit to Ferrara. On the other hand, *Melissa* is unlikely to have been painted much after this date, since in the second half of the first decade Dosso's female types begin to grow plumper and his poses more complex. Compared, for example, to the figure of the Virgin in the *Virgin and Child with Saints George and Michael* of about 1517–18 (fig. 6), the enchantress is significantly simpler and more planar in pose, and finer and more delicate of feature.

An x-radiograph made during the recent restoration of the painting reveals that the composition originally included on the left a second major figure, a standing knight (fig. 58). Presumably this knight was the owner of the suit of armor now represented in the lower left corner. It is as if Dosso, while showing us the dominance of the enchantress, is also imitating her magical powers by making his figures appear and disappear. The knight's casual cross-legged pose is similar to that given to a *Saint Jerome* perhaps a year or two earlier, and the crooked right arm, hand resting on hip, may be compared with the attitude of the closely contemporary *Standard Bearer* (cat. no. 13).⁶

PH

1. The picture does not appear in the recently discovered Villa Borghese inventory of about 1633 (see cat. no. 25, n. 1); but, as kindly pointed out to me by Kristina Herrmann Fiore, that does not necessarily mean that it did not yet belong to the the Borghese collection, since the inventory is far from complete.

2. "Una Maga che stà facendo incantesimi." Manilli 1650, p. 82.

3. "Un quadro grande in tela con una Donna che rappresenta Maga con una torcia che accende al foco con un Cane e altre figure a sedere." Della Pergola 1964–65, pp. 203, no. 451, 213.

4. Rinaldis 1937, p. 230 (IX:16).

5. "Una donzella di viso giocondo,/ch' a' bei sembianti et alla ricca vesta/essa parea di non ignobil grado." English version from Ariosto 1974, p. 19.

6. See also the discussion of *Melissa* in Anna Coliva's essay, pp. 75–76.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting, which was restored in 1996, is in generally very good condition. However, both visual examination and ultraviolet photography reveal that the face is worn and has been repainted in areas, as have the sky and the edges of the picture.

The canvas is a plain weave with 20–21 threads per centimeter in both directions. Two pieces of linen were used, sewn together horizontally. Imprints of the original strainer were found at left and right about 3 centimeters from the edge, indicating that about 2–3 centimeters are missing at each side. No imprints were found at the top or bottom.

Beneath the paint layers on the right there are various shades of a dark preparation; presumably it continues under most of the painting. A brown preparation is visible beneath part of *Melissa*'s cloak, on top of which is a yellow substrate glazed with copper green for the lining. A modeled white mixed, perhaps, with some other blue is under the dark azurite of her dress. The composition of the red is similar to that in the *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41)—a dark red lake painted over a brilliant pigment, presumably vermillion. Some of the pigment analysis, done with false infrared photography, identified the pigment used in the sky as azurite. The treatment of *Melissa*'s cloak is unusual because azurite is painted over natural ultramarine (perhaps a pentimento); usually, ultramarine, being very expensive, is sparingly applied over azurite.

Infrared photography reveals areas of under-drawing, done with a large brush, to delineate contours and lay out areas of shading. The x-radiograph (fig. 58) reveals notable changes in the composition. A man in armor stood to the left, where a hound is now depicted; the sorceress's eyes were turned toward him. Another dog, or a fox, was at the left edge of the picture. There are various other pentimenti, subsequently covered by layers of lead white.

The painting includes stylistic features character-

istic of Dosso: the dog's precisely painted whiskers; a red dot in the corners of eyes; careful, detailed execution of the cloak and its fringe detail and of the armor. Eyebrow hairs are faintly visible in infrared photography, but abrasion has made it impossible to tell whether Melissa had eyelashes. Dosso's particular sensitivity in painting flowers and animals is evident.

(Some information drawn from the Condition Report by M. Cardinali, M. B. De Ruggieri, and C. Falcucci, EMMEBICI, Rome.)

13. Standard Bearer

Ca. 1515–16
Oil on canvas, 30 3/4 × 20 1/4 in. (78.1 × 51.4 cm)
Allentown Art Museum,
Samuel H. Kress
Collection 1960 (1960.13)

Provenance
Principe Barberini, Rome;
Alessandro Contini
Bonacossi, Florence;
Samuel H. Kress, New
York (1932); Allentown
Art Museum, Allentown,
Pennsylvania (from 1960)¹

References
Longhi 1940 (1956 ed.,
p. 159); Arslan 1957, p. 260;
Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 230,
365, 372, p. 24 (1965);
Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 23, 71;
Puppi 1965; Berenson
1968, p. 110; Gibbons 1968,
pp. 120, 165; Shapley 1968,
p. 75; Hale 1990, p. 75;
Ballarin in Paris 1993, p.
408; Ballarin 1994–95, pp.
72, 308; Faietti 1994, p. 31

Even more than Dosso's early landscapes, this spirited depiction of a soldier, perhaps a mercenary, documents the painter's evident fascination with woodcuts and engravings imported from southern Germany. Similar standard-bearing lansquenets, or foot soldiers, were frequently represented by German printmakers such as Albrecht Dürer, Albrecht Altdorfer, Daniel Hopfer, and Hans Schäufelein (fig. 70), as well as in prints by the Bolognese Amico Aspertini. Dosso's figure, with its jauntily swaggering pose and swirling, wind-filled banner, is entirely in keeping with those prototypes. However, such an image is highly unusual, if not unique, in Italian painting. Hale (1990) sought to explain the anomaly by regarding the work as a portrait, but this seems unlikely. It is more reasonable to assume that, just as *Travelers in a Wood* (cat. no. 11) approximates autonomous landscape painting, so this creation of Dosso's, portraying a picturesquely raffish but anonymous figure from contemporary life, amounts to a genre picture. As in so many of Dosso's genre-type print sources, the standard may have originally appeared to extend beyond the picture field.

The figure, wearing multicolored, fashionably slashed doublet and hose and an exuberant feathered cap, is executed with great pictorial freedom and a minimum of draftsmanship. X-ray photographs reveal that Dosso made extensive alterations in the course of the painting: originally, for instance, the face was positioned frontally, and the brim of the hat showed a characteristically mili-



Fig. 70. Hans Schäufelein, *Standard Bearer*. Woodcut (Hollstein 64). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1927 (27.54.115)

tary crenellated edge. Pentimenti are clearly visible in the sword and sword hilt. The bold, sketchy brushwork and somewhat careless articulation of anatomy and foreshortening indicate that this is a relatively early work. Indeed, since the picture's



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emergence in the 1930s, critics have dated it progressively earlier: thus, while Longhi (1940) placed it in the late 1520s and Mezzetti (1965a) in the early 1520s, Gibbons (1968) and Ballarin (in Paris 1993) moved it back to the later teens. Probably even more accurate is Dreyer's (1964–65) implied assignment of the work to the mid-teens, close in time to the Uffizi *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (cat. no. 14) with its similarly squarish physiognomies, and before Dosso developed the more sculptural figure style already exemplified by the *Saint Jerome* of about 1518–19 (cat. no. 20).

PH

1. Information on provenance from Shapley 1968, p. 75.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is fair: the painting has been abraded and was flattened by relining after it came to the Kress collection in 1932. It was restored in 1953. The original size of the canvas cannot be determined precisely: there is an additional 2-centimeter strip at the left, and no cusping is found at the sides. The imprint of the original strainer appears 4 centimeters from the top, and there is pronounced cusping at the top. The preparation seems to be a creamy white. The banner is painted with orpiment and some realgar. There was probably some dabbing on the small areas of deep green on the sleeve and jacket. The brushwork is very summary. Shrinking cracks typical for Dosso's paintings, caused by underlying pentimenti and/or the use of slow-drying walnut oil, are evident.

14. *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*

Ca. 1516
Oil on panel, 20½ ×
16¾ in. (52 × 42.6 cm)
Galleria degli Uffizi,
Florence

Provenance
Galleria Palatina, Palazzo
Pitti, Florence (by 1832);
Galleria degli Uffizi,
Florence (from 1919)

References
Boschini in Baruffaldi
1697–1722 (1844–46 ed.,
vol. 1, p. 293, n. 1);
Inghirami 1832, p. 70; Frizzi
1847–50, vol. 5, pp. 361–62;
Burckhardt 1855, p. 892;
Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, p. 284;
Berenson 1907, p. 209;
Patzak 1908, p. 246; Gardner
1911, p. 231; Zwanziger
1911, pp. 79–80; Mendelsohn
1914, pp. 31, 42–43; Longhi

Like the probably slightly earlier *Virgin and Child (La Zingarella)* (cat. no. 7), this intimate scene of the Holy Family in a thickly wooded setting represents Dosso's highly personal response to earlier Venetian landscapes such as Giorgione's *Tempest* (fig. 3) and to German prints like Alt dorfer's *Saint Christopher Stooping to Raise the Christ Child* of about 1512. As Gibbons (1968) pointed out, the painting does not really depict the rest on the flight, since there are no signs of the customary donkey or of traveling equipment such as a satchel or water bottle; however, the work's traditional title has the merit of suggesting the remoteness of the Holy Family from human habitation and the picturesque wildness of their surroundings.

The picture has always been rightly seen as a relatively early work, close to *Melissa* (cat. no. 12); and, like *Melissa*, it probably dates from slightly earlier than the period around 1518–22 usually assigned to it. Thus, while the landscape is less loosely vaporous and more carefully structured than that in the *Zingarella*, the working out of the poses, and especially the foreshortening of the

Virgin's left arm, is not as resolved as it is in pictures of the later teens, like *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 20) and the Borghese *Virgin and Child* (cat. no. 18). The painting's execution maintains a beautiful balance between vigorous breadth—the rapidly sketched grasses in the foreground, the general use of thickly impastoed highlights—and a minute delicacy, seen, for instance, in the treatment of Joseph's mustache and the embroidery of the Virgin's headdress, veil, and fringed shawl.

PH

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of both the painting and the panel is very good; the painting was restored for this exhibition. The panel is 1 centimeter thick and seems slightly cut or planed on the left, right, and top.



I4

I2I

1927a (1967 ed., p. 307); A.Venturi 1928, p. 976; Berenson 1932, p. 175; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 81); Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., p. 159); Lasareff 1941, pp. 132–33; Francis 1950, p. 65; Arslan 1957, pp. 259–60; Baldass 1961, p. 82; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 413; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 229–30, 372; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 17, 87; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 111; Gibbons 1968, pp. 122, 177; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 316); Borea 1979, p. 251; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 409; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 35, 73, 303

There are some shrinkage crackles in the background around the head of Saint Joseph, in his yellow cloak, and in the Madonna's blue mantle, presumably caused by the slow drying of the walnut oil medium and the numerous layers of paint. The imprimatura is dark gray. There is a modeled white substrate beneath the red blouse of the Virgin, and a darker paint layer under the sky. The dark blue substrate beneath the trees is barely visible because the glazes over it are well preserved. There are finger or hand prints along the whole left side of the painting, perhaps caused by its

being handled while still wet. A large finger smudge can be seen in the little cloud. There are signs of dabbing in the trees and on the green lining of the Virgin's cloak, which is painted over a yellow substrate. A large vertical pentimento from the chest to the legs of the Christ child is visible to the eye, as is the diagonal gable of a shed over Saint Joseph's head; the gable can be seen in the x-radiograph as well. The Madonna's veil and perhaps the highlights in the trees, both in thick, sharp impasto, may be painted with an egg-oil emulsion.

15. Agony in the Garden

Ca. 1516
Oil on panel, 16½ × 13 in. (42.5 × 33 cm)
Raccolte d'arte della Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Ferrara
(on loan to the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara)

Provenance
Possibly Convent of Sant'Antonio Abbate, Ferrara; Uberto Strozzi Sacrati, Florence (by 1850);³ by descent, Strozzi Sacrati family (sale, Sotheby's, Milan, December 15, 1992, no. 311); Cassa di Risparmio, Ferrara

References
Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 164; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 120); Padovani 1954, p. 158;

In this characteristically original rendering of the traditional religious subject of the Agony, Dosso visualizes the Garden of Gethsemane as a nocturnal woodland in which fitful illumination creates sudden pools of light. Christ's vision of his imminent Passion is imaginatively circumscribed by the arc of a rainbow, storm clouds, and jets of flame. In style and date the panel appears close to *Melissa* of about 1515–16 and the *Uffizi Rest on the Flight into Egypt* of about 1516 (cat. nos. 12, 14). Although its execution lacks the refinement of either of those, it is unwarranted to conclude, as Gibbons (1968) does and following him Ballarin (1994–95), that the panel is therefore by Battista. Comparison with paintings attributable to the early Battista, such as the Cleveland *Holy Family with a Shepherd* of about 1518–20 (fig. 64) or the Chapel Hill *Holy Family with the Infant Baptist* of about 1530 (cat. no. 51), shows that the younger brother's works lack the vigorous brushwork and quality of imagination evident in the *Agony in the Garden*.

A representation of this subject, attributed to Dosso, is recorded in the 1592 inventory of the collection of Lucrezia d'Este, sister of Duke Alfonso II d'Este;¹ records place the same picture in Rome in the seventeenth century, in the collections of Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini (1603), Olimpia Aldobrandini (1626), and Olimpia Aldobrandini Pamphilj (before 1665; 1682).² But,

as was demonstrated by Romani (in Ballarin 1994–95), that work cannot be identical with the *Agony* seen here, since it was on canvas and measured three Roman *palmi* (26 inches) high; it must, therefore, be either unrecognized or lost. Romani plausibly suggested that the present picture, which is inscribed "S^o Antonio" on the back, once belonged to the convent of Sant'Antonio Abbate in Ferrara.

PH

1. Della Pergola 1959, p. 344.
2. See, respectively, D'Onofrio 1964, p. 158, no. 73; Della Pergola 1960, p. 429, no. 50; D'Onofrio 1964, p. 158, no. 73; Della Pergola 1962–63, p. 69, no. 217.
3. Padovani 1954.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is in good condition. The crack running diagonally through the face of Christ is presumably due to a knot in the panel. The thick paint layer was quickly laid over a rough, lumpy panel, and no attempts to level out the surface of the panel were made during the priming with gesso or the subsequent application of the dark gray imprimatura. The yellow-brown knoll on which Christ kneels is painted over a light green substrate, while



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his blue cloak is over a lead white substrate. Three different types of red are found in this small painting: Christ's red robe is red lake over a modeled lead white substrate mixed with some red; the robe worn by the apostle in the center appears to be red lake painted over what may be a red earth; the apostle on the right wears a robe that seems to be of red

lake over a solid red substrate (presumably vermillion). He has a cloak painted with lead-tin yellow, while the cloak of the apostle on the left is in orpiment. Christ's garment has some imprints that might be fingerprints. Minor changes that stand out in relief can be seen, including, beneath the central apostle, a diagonal line that might have been a staff.

Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 15, 86;
Berenson 1968, p. 112;
Gibbons 1968, pp. 126,
225; Ballarin 1994–95,
pp. 316–17; Ferrara 1996,
p. 139

16. Lamentation over the Body of Christ

*Ca. 1517
Oil on panel, 14 1/8 x
11 3/4 in. (36 x 30 cm)
National Gallery,
London 4032*

Provenance

Possibly Lucrezia d'Este, Ferrara (1592 inv. no. 31); allegedly, de Rothem family, Hungary (throughout 19th century); Baron Bernard de Rothem, London (ca. 1900); Sir Claude Phillips, London (ca. 1905–24); his bequest to the National Gallery, London (1924)²

References

Phillips 1906, p. 354; Berenson 1907, p. 209; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 81–82; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 31, 39–40; Phillips 1915, p. 133; Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., p. 307); A. Venturi 1928, p. 976; Berenson 1932, p. 175; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 81); Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., p. 159); Lasareff 1941, pp. 132–33; Arslan 1957, p. 260; Baldass 1961, p. 81; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 410; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 228–29; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 23–24, 93; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 129–30, 185–86; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 317); Gould 1975, pp. 82–83; Buzzoni 1988, p. 264; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 408; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 39, 70, 309; Faietti 1994, p. 31; Bayer 1998

Passion themes are rare in Dosso's work, and this little panel may therefore be identical with a *Pietà* recorded in the 1592 inventory of the holdings of Lucrezia d'Este, granddaughter of Duke Alfonso I and Lucrezia Borgia.¹ If so, it may well have been commissioned for private devotion by the duchess, whose extreme piety was well known. The picture, an unusually direct portrayal of physical suffering and intense grief, is in any case consistent with a devotional purpose. Although still usually called a *Pietà* (a term referring to a timeless image of the sorrowing Virgin), it should more properly be described as a Lamentation over the body of Christ, since, as Gibbons (1968) observed, equal emphasis is given to the other lamenting figures, Mary Magdalen (at Christ's head) and another Mary. References to time and place are provided: in the foreground, the crown of thorns and the dice thrown by the Roman soldiers for possession of Christ's garments; to the right, the mouth of the sepulchre; and in the landscape background to the left, a visionary Mount Calvary topped by the three crosses.

Beginning with Phillips (1906), scholars have often seen the picture as one of Dosso's earliest works because of its links with a strong expressionist tradition in Ferrarese painting, represented in the fifteenth century by Ercole de' Roberti and later by Ludovico Mazzolini. Thus, operating on the assumption that Dosso was born and trained in Ferrara, Phillips dated the work earlier than *Circe* (cat. no. 3), whose Giorgionism he thought marked a later stage in the painter's development. This view was shared by Mendelsohn (1914), who proposed a date of about 1505, and by Dreyer (1964–65), with a slightly later dating to about 1510, and Berenson (1932, 1968), who consistently described the picture as "early." Longhi (1927a, 1940) disagreed and related the picture instead to an anti-classicizing trend widespread in Lombard and Emilian painting in the years around 1520, represented by such painters as Aspertini, Romanino, and Pordenone. This interpretation was followed by Mezzetti (1965a), Puppi (1965), and Ballarin (1994–95), as well as by Gibbons (1968), who, basing his judgment on the

Michelangelesque muscularity of the dead Christ and the thickset, masculine proportions of the women, dated the work as late as about 1525.

The figures' ungainly poses and anatomical distortions may certainly be understood as intended rather than naive—as clear reflections of Dosso's search for an expressive language consistent with his tragic theme. Perhaps more significant than the influence of contemporary North Italians is that of German prints: those by Dürer on Passion themes, as already suggested by Mendelsohn, or Hans Baldung's *Lamentation* woodcut of 1514, in which, as Bayer (1998) points out, Mary Magdalen appears in a similar pose of wild grief. At the same time, Dosso's colors retain a Venetian richness, and the sparkling vividness of his brushwork is entirely ungraphic. The impressionistic freedom of the luminous background landscape, in particular, does not find a precise parallel in any of Dosso's securely dated works; but the style of the picture as a whole seems compatible with a date of about 1517, close in time to the London *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 7) and the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* (fig. 6).

PH

1. "Uno [quadro] di Una Pietà di man del Dosso." See Della Pergola 1959, p. 344, no. 31.

2. Information on provenance from Gould 1975.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition appears to be very good. The panel has not been thinned and has two slender cross-battens. The female figure standing at the right wears a yellow blouse that seems to be painted in orpiment and has its typical grainy appearance. The x-radiograph reveals changes to the cloak of the Virgin; it is also clear that the blue dress of the standing saint extended much farther under what is now her yellow blouse. The brushstrokes are crisp, and the painting has considerable detail. Particularly noteworthy are the tassels on the pillow, the roots hanging down the hill, the crosses, and the pebbles.



17. *Nativity*

Ca. 1517–18
Oil on panel, 19 ½ ×
12 ½ in. (50 × 32 cm)
Galleria Borghese,
Rome 220

Provenance
Lucrezia d'Este, Ferrara
(1592 inv. no. 12); Cardinal
Pietro Aldobrandini,
Rome (1603 inv. no. 107);
Olimpia Aldobrandini,
Rome (1626 inv. no. 65);
Olimpia Aldobrandini
Pamphilj, Rome (before
1665 inv. no. 107); estate
of Olimpia Aldobrandini
Pamphilj, Rome (1682
inv. no. 327); Quadreria
Borghese, Palazzo di

References
Morelli 1890 (1892 ed.,
p. 216, n. 7); A. Venturi
1893, p. 130; Gruyer 1897,
vol. 2, p. 286; Berenson
1907, p. 210; Gardner 1911,
p. 232; Zwanziger 1911,
pp. 80–81; Mendelsohn
1914, pp. 52–53; A. Venturi
1928, p. 977; Berenson
1932, p. 175; Barbantini in
Ferrara 1933, p. 171;
Longhi 1940 (1956 ed.,
p. 159); Lasareff 1941,
pp. 132–33; Della Pergola
1955, pp. 33–34; Arslan
1957, p. 259; Dreyer
1964–65, p. 365; Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 17, 112; Berenson
1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968,
pp. 122–23, 200–201;
Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 43,
315–16

This delightfully spontaneous *Nativity*, with its exotically turbaned Virgin and its boisterous trio of flying angels, was almost certainly painted for Duke Alfonso or his duchess, Lucrezia Borgia, since it is recorded as being in the collection of their granddaughter Lucrezia d'Este in 1592.¹ After her death in 1598 it must have passed to her principal heir, the papal nephew Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, in whose collection in Rome it is listed in 1603;² it then appears in several inventories of Aldobrandini's heirs during the seventeenth century; and it probably passed into the Borghese collection in 1769.³ Descriptions of the Borghese picture correspond to this one in height, given as approximately two Roman *palmi* (17½ inches), and in having "la Gloria sopra" (the angelic glory at the top). The legible opening words on two of the angels' song sheets begin two of the best-known hymns in praise of God: "Gloria in exc[elsis] Deo]" and "Te Deum laud[amus]."

In all the early inventories down to that of the Quadreria Borghese of about 1790,⁴ the picture is attributed to Dosso; and although Morelli (1890) gave it instead to Battista, the traditional attribution is clearly correct. Characteristic of the early Dosso at his best are not only the cheerful humor of the child-angels but also the handling of the paint, with its paradoxical combination of rapid breadth and minute delicacy. Thus, while the cloud behind Joseph's shoulder is applied in thick smudges of paint that show the clear imprint of the painter's fingertips, Joseph's hair and beard are executed in fine, wispy strokes. Most critics have seen the picture as close in date to the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* from Sant'Agostino in Modena (fig. 6), and there are many similarities of style and motif. Indeed, the *Nativity*, whose arched top makes it resemble a miniature altarpiece, reveals a kindred interest in convoluted draperies, some with a high sheen. The antics of the child-angels closely echo those in the altarpiece, and their gaily multicolored wings and floral headdresses may be compared with those of Saint Michael. The *Nativity* also shares with the altarpiece a range of brilliantly iridescent colors, somewhat different from the deeper and richer colors of the probably slightly earlier *Melissa* (cat. no. 12), and a landscape that has the luminous sketchiness of a watercolor. The Sant'Agostino altarpiece had usually been dated close to the

Modena Cathedral altarpiece, which was installed in 1522 (fig. 1). Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), pointing out stylistic differences, dated the former a few years before the latter, about 1519. The recent discovery that the cathedral altarpiece was largely complete by 1520⁵ suggests that the Sant'Agostino altarpiece dates from slightly earlier than that, about 1517–18; thus the *Nativity* does as well.

PH

1. "Un quadro con la Natività di N^{ro} Signore di mano del Dosso." Della Pergola 1959, pp. 343, no. 12, 349.
2. "Una Natività del Signore con la Gloria sopra, in tavola, del Dosso." D'Onofrio 1964, p. 160, no. 107.
3. Inventory of Olimpia Aldobrandini, 1626, no. 65 (Della Pergola 1960, pp. 430–41); inventories of Olimpia Aldobrandini Pamphilj, before 1665, no. 107 (D'Onofrio 1964, p. 160), and 1682, no. 327 (Della Pergola 1962–63, pp. 75, 85); inventory of G. B. Aldobrandini Pamphilj, 1709–10 (Fredericksen 1998).
4. Rinaldis 1937, p. 220 (I:24).
5. See Giovannini 1988, pp. 207–9, 222–23.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is in good condition, although it is not perfectly legible in its present state. The dark blue substrate is quite prominent beneath the trees. The Virgin's garment has a modeled pink (lead white with a red pigment) substrate, glazed with a red lake. Saint Joseph's yellow drape seems to be orpiment, as does the shirt of the angel holding the scroll with "Te Deum laudamus." From the false color IR photograph, natural ultramarine has been identified in the Virgin's blue cloak, an unusual usage for Dosso, who employed azurite blue in a number of his works. Fingerprints can be seen in quite a few areas, among them the green drape of the angel holding the "Gloria," the red robe under Saint Joseph's yellow drape, the red drape over the angel at the right, and the Virgin's red cloak. Probably because of the thick preparatory layer of lead white, the x-radiograph does not reveal very much. Nevertheless, some pentimenti can be identified: there was a drape over the Virgin's shoulder; the pillar under the arch in the background was originally a rock formation with a tree or bush next to it; and changes were made in Saint Joseph's sleeve, his staff, and the placement of his face.

(Some information drawn from the Condition Report by M. Cardinali, M. B. De Ruggieri, and C. Falcucci of EMMEBICI, Rome.)



18. Virgin and Child

Ca. 1517–18
Oil on panel, 13 3/4 ×
11 in. (35 × 28 cm)
Galleria Borghese,
Rome 211

Provenance
Probably Lucrezia d'Este,
Ferrara (1592 inv., no. 15);
Borghese collection,
Rome (legal inv., 1833)

References
A. Venturi 1893, p. 126;
Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, p. 286;
Berenson 1907, p. 211;
Gardner 1911, p. 232;
Zwanziger 1911, p. 80;
Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 31,
41–42; Phillips 1915, p. 133;
Longhi 1927a (1967 ed.,
p. 307); A. Venturi 1928,
p. 971; Berenson 1932,
p. 175; Barbantini in
Ferrara 1933, p. 159;
Longhi 1934 (1956 ed.,
pp. 81, 86); Lasareff 1941,
pp. 133–35; Della Pergola
1955, pp. 32–33; Baldass
1961, p. 82; Dreyer
1964–65, pp. 228–29;
Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 24,
111–12; Puppi 1965;
Berenson 1968, p. 113;
Gibbons 1968, pp. 129–30,
198; Freedberg 1971 (1975
ed., p. 317); Ballarin
1994–95, pp. 39, 307

This rendering of the time-honored theme of the Madonna and Child derives its freshness and vivacity above all from the evident speed and confidence of its execution, with very visible highlights created by trails and slashes of white and yellow pigment. As in the Borghese *Nativity* (cat. no. 17), where the Virgin wears a similarly diaphanous veil, the picture's tiny scale is combined with an unexpected grandeur of design, enhanced by the Raphaelesque sweep of the Virgin's cloak and the energetic, space-creating contrapposto of the Child. In recent decades datings have ranged from about 1517 (Dreyer 1964–65, Ballarin 1994–95) to about 1525 (Gibbons 1968); but critics are rightly agreed in relating the picture stylistically to the *Nativity* and also to the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* (fig. 6), the London *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 7), and the London *Lamentation* (cat. no. 16).

The only known version of its subject by Dosso, this picture is probably identifiable with one of two Madonnas attributed to him in Este collections in the late sixteenth century. The first, less likely candidate was recorded in 1586 in the chapel of Margherita Gonzaga, wife of Duke Alfonso II. Presumably Duchess Margherita retained possession of it until her death in 1618, together with another picture by Dosso representing "the three Magi" and probably identifiable with the London *Adoration*.¹ More likely to be identical to the Borghese *Virgin and Child* is a picture recorded in the inventory of Margherita's sister-in-law Lucrezia d'Este in 1592.² Included in the same inventory is the Borghese *Nativity*, which certainly belonged to Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini in Rome by 1603 (see cat. no. 17); and although the *Virgin and Child* is not unambiguously recorded as in the Borghese collection until 1833, it may well correspond to one of many Madonnas listed in the various Aldobrandini and

Borghese collection inventories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as by unknown artists.³ In any case, the picture is likely to have belonged originally to the grandparents of Alfonso II and Lucrezia d'Este, Alfonso I and Lucrezia Borgia.

PH

1. The list of pictures "in la capeletta dela Ser^{ma} Duchessa di ferrara" in 1586, published by A. Venturi 1888, pp. 425–26, includes "Uno [quadro] dei tre Maggi di Dossi" and "una m^a di Dossi."

2. "Di sopra la cornice a man manca vi sono due quadretti con la Madonna con N^{ro} Sig^{re} Imbrazzo di mano di Mondino Scarsella, et l'altro con una Madonna simile di mano del Dosso" (Della Pergola 1959, pp. 343, no. 15, 349).

3. Della Pergola 1955, pp. 32–33.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is very good. The support is poplar and not canvas, as stated by Gibbons and Ballarin. Dark brown glazes on the shaded parts of the trees are still well preserved, although they were probably greener originally. The x-radiograph shows that the image was painted quickly and surely. The lead white in the preparatory layer makes it difficult to see changes, except for the very faint image of a face in the upper right corner, which may have been an idea for a Saint Joseph, later abandoned. Other pentimenti seem visible beneath shrinkage cracks in the sky and the Virgin's cloak. In the cluster of trees around the Virgin, the lower left section is painted directly over the sky with a green-brown glaze. The landscape of sheep and trees is very impressionistic, with a pronounced sfumato effect.

(Some information drawn from the Condition Report by M. Cardinali, M. B. De Ruggieri, and C. Falcucci of EMMEBICI, Rome.)



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19. Scene from a Legend (Aeneas and Achates on the Libyan Coast?)

Ca. 1517–18
Oil on canvas, 23½ × 34½ in. (58.7 × 87.6 cm)
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.,
Samuel H. Kress
Collection 1939.1.250

Provenance
Alfonso I, Ferrara (by ca.
1517/18–34); by descent,
Este family, Ferrara; prob-
ably Cardinal Scipione
Borghese, Rome
(1608–33); probably Prince
Giovanni Battista Borghese
(1693 inv. no. 390); Julius
Böhler, Munich; Contini
Bonacossi, Florence (early
1920s–after 1933); Samuel
H. Kress, New York (1936);
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.⁷

References
Longhi 1927b (1967 ed.,
pp. 157–61); A. Venturi
1928, p. 978; Barbantini in
Ferrara 1933, p. 198;
A. Venturi 1933, p. 386;
Longhi 1934 (1956 ed.,
p. 86); Buscaroli 1935,
p. 216; Lasareff 1941,
pp. 132–33; Tietze-Conrat
1948; Suida 1949, p. 284;
Gilbert 1952, p. 205; Arslan
1957, p. 260; Antonelli
Trenti 1964, p. 410; Dreyer
1964–65, p. 363, p. 24
(1965); Puppi 1964, p. 33;
Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 17,
124; Puppi 1965; Berenson
1968, p. 114; Gibbons 1968,
pp. 91, 114, 123–24, 214–15;
Shapley 1968, pp. 73–74;
Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed.,
p. 316); Hope 1971, p. 643;

When first publishing this picture in 1927, Roberto Longhi tellingly likened its mood of romantic nostalgia to that of the *Orlando Furioso* and compared the lansquenets in the right foreground, with their fancy hats and huge swords, to Ariosto's chivalric heroes. Longhi also emphasized how intrinsic to the poetic mood is the sketchy freedom of the handling: on the left, patches of intense color glow like gems against the dark priming, and in the right background, a vision of an uninhabited town shimmers "like butterfly wings."

Longhi's dating of the work to about 1520 has been generally accepted, and no critic has proposed a date earlier than about 1517–18 (Ballarin in Paris 1993; 1994–95) or later than the mid-1520s (Gibbons 1968). Indeed, the treatment of the foliage in long, rhythmical strokes is very like that in the background of the Modena Cathedral altarpiece of 1518–21 (fig. 1) and of the stylistically closely related *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 20), as distinct from works of the period about 1513–16, in which foliage is instead suggested by staccato blobs of white highlights. The *Legend* lacks the fineness of handling seen in the foreground of the Modena altarpiece and of the *Saint Jerome*; for this reason Tietze-Conrat (1948) suggested, as she did of the New York *Three Ages of Man* (cat. no. 10), that it constitutes a fragment of some larger composition. Indeed, as with the *Three Ages*, there is physical evidence that the *Legend* has been cut, certainly down both sides and probably at the upper and lower edges as well.¹ But a more probable explanation for the sketchy, spontaneous effect is that the painting was intended for more distant viewing than the *Saint Jerome*.

Even had the canvas not been trimmed, the scene, presented with apparently deliberate ambiguity, would be difficult to identify. Despite its Ariostean flavor, Longhi plausibly assumed that the subject was mythological. One of his tentative suggestions, the departure of the Argonauts, has been widely adopted;² yet, as Gibbons (1968) pointed out, Jason and the Argonauts traveled in a single ship, the *Argo*, whereas two are shown here. More promising is another of Longhi's suggested subjects, Aeneas and Achates, from Virgil's *Aeneid*

(1:310–14). This idea was taken up and developed by Shapley (1968, 1979), who argued that the canvas, together with *The Sicilian Games* and *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields* (cat. no. 24), once formed part of the frieze representing ten scenes from the *Aeneid* that Dosso painted for the upper walls of Duke Alfonso's Camerino. All ten scenes, which were described in a letter of 1608 as measuring one *canna* wide by three *palmi* high, were acquired by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in 1608 and sent to Rome;³ and all ten were still recorded in the 1693 inventory of the Borghese collection.⁴ Shapley's suggestion is corroborated by, first, the close correspondence in height of the *Legend* and the two other surviving canvases (23 inches); and second, the probable identification of the *Legend*, as Hope (1971) pointed out, with an item described in the 1693 inventory as "Un quadro di 4 palmi longo alto 2 p^{mi} e mezzo in circa del N° 2 con figure Bandiere Vascelli et altro Cornice dorata del Dosi" (A picture by Dosso about 4 *palmi* wide by 2½ high, belonging to no. 2, with figures, banners, ships, and other things, in a gilded frame).⁵ Both this description and these approximate dimensions correspond to the picture in its present state; therefore, the work must have been reduced in width by nearly one half sometime between 1608 and 1693. It is reasonable to infer that the canvas removed was principally on the left side of the composition, because the forms at the left edge are abruptly truncated, while the two lansquenets fit neatly into the right corner (although, as noted by Andrea Rothe, the right edge was somewhat cut as well).

Shapley identified the subject of the *Legend* as a scene from Book I of the *Aeneid* and entitled the picture *Aeneas and Achates on the Libyan Coast*. According to this reading, the crowd of figures on the left represents the Trojans, both men and women, recovering from a shipwreck off North Africa; the soldiers in the foreground are Aeneas and his trusty lieutenant Achates; and the distant townscape is the city of Carthage. While accepting the literary source as Book I, Del Bravo (1994) objected to the title on the grounds that the relevant passage of the *Aeneid* (1:157ff.) has Achates carrying a bow and arrows, not a broadsword. Del



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Bravo interpreted the two lansquenets as anonymous Trojans and suggested that Aeneas had been depicted delivering his exhortation (I:198–207) in the part of the picture now lost. The likelihood, however, that the lost part was on the left, together with the fact that most figures are facing toward the right, make this suggestion implausible. Shapley—probably wisely, in view of the fragmentary state of the canvas—did not specify exact verses; her title would still be appropriate if the scene represented a slightly later moment, when Aeneas and Achates, leaving the damaged Trojan ships concealed under shady trees with their companions, set off to explore the Libyan coastline (I:310–14).

Shapley's identification of the *Legend* painting as part of the Aeneas frieze, especially since it was

reinforced by Hope's comments, has been generally accepted.⁶ But a note of skepticism was sounded by Ballarin (1994–95), who, developing an observation of Mezzetti's (1965a), emphasized the differences in style and approach between the *Legend* and the two scenes certainly from the *Aeneas* frieze and now in Ottawa and Birmingham (cat. no. 24). Indeed, the rainbow colors of the *Legend* resemble those of the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* (fig. 6) and the *Nativity* (cat. no. 17) of about 1517–18, while the colors in the Ottawa and Birmingham canvases are more restricted in range; moreover, the figure postures in the *Legend* are still relatively simple by comparison. Thus, Ballarin is certainly correct to separate the *Legend* from the other two by a few years. It is also true that the courtly and chivalric

Goodgal 1978, pp. 170–73;
Shapley 1979, pp. 164–66;
Kaplan 1982, p. 13; Humfrey
in Bologna, Washington,
New York 1986–87,
pp. 114–15; B. L. Brown
1987, pp. 47–49; Cavalli-
Björkman 1987, p. 75;
Laskin and Pantazzi 1987,
pp. 94–95; Ballarin in Paris
1993, p. 409; Ballarin
1994–95, pp. 40, 45, 71–73,
309–10; Del Bravo 1994,
p. 81; Romani 1996, p. 95

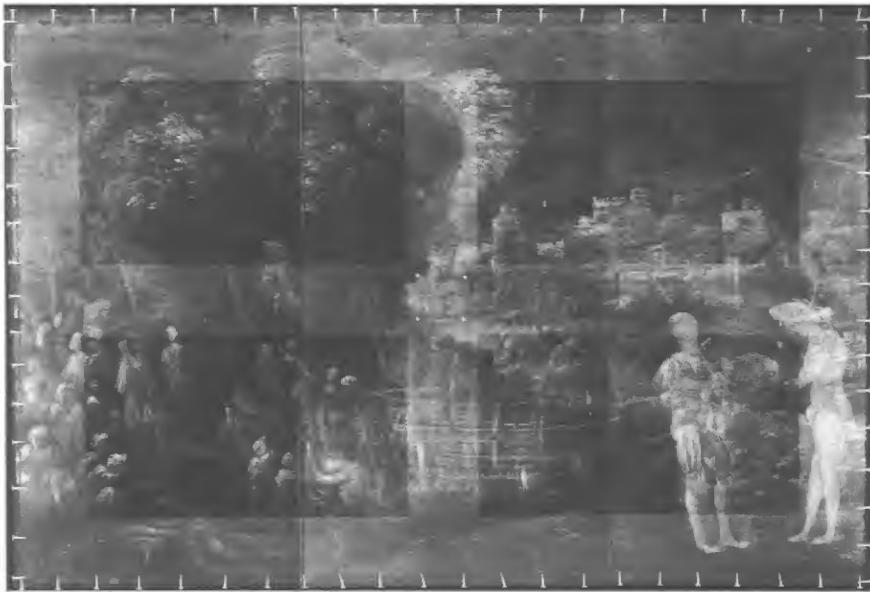


Fig. 71. X-radiograph of *Scene from a Legend*. Noteworthy are the changes to the ships' hulls and the eventual painting out of small figures at the left.

character of the *Legend* has been abandoned in the Ottawa and Birmingham canvases in favor of heroic nudity *all'antica*, and, in the case of the *Sicilian Games*, a primitivistic view of ancient mythology completely absent from the *Legend*. Yet Ballarin's alternative suggestion—that the *Legend* constituted part of the frieze of sixteen "landscapes" painted by Dosso for the duke's bedroom, neighboring the Camerino—is hardly convincing either, since that frieze was inherited by Cesare d'Este in 1598 and was sent to Modena, not Rome; and in any case, it seems unlikely that the present multifigured composition would have been described as a landscape. In the end, the circumstantial evidence of a common height and especially a common provenance linking the Washington with the Birmingham and Ottawa canvases remains very strong. Although it may seem inherently unlikely that Dosso painted the Aeneas frieze in differing styles over the course of several years, he appears to have followed just such a procedure in the case of a closely related ducal commission, the ceiling of Alfonso's bedroom (cat. no. 26).

PH

1. Information from Barbara Berrie of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
2. For instance, by A. Venturi 1928, Mezzetti 1965a, and Ballarin 1994–95.

3. Letter of March 1608 from Innocenzo Massimo to Cardinal Scipione Borghese (Mezzetti 1965b, p. 82). One *canna architettonica romana*, comprising 10 *palmi architettonici*, is equivalent to 88 inches; 1 *canna mercantile romana*, comprising 8 *palmi mercantili*, is equivalent to 78½ inches. Whichever method of measurement was adopted here, it is clear that the dimensions given are only approximate. See also cat. no. 24, n. 7.

4. Della Pergola 1964–65. See cat. no. 24, n. 10.

5. Ibid., p. 461, no. 390.

6. Goodgal 1978, p. 173; Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, p. 114; B. L. Brown 1987, pp. 47–49; Cavalli-Björkman 1987, p. 75; Del Bravo 1994, p. 81.

7. Provenance from Shapley 1968, p. 74.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of the painting is very good, although some glazes on the trees may be lost. The canvas is a plain weave with a thread count of 12 to 13 per centimeter vertically and 11 to 12 per centimeter horizontally. At 1.5 centimeters from the top edge one can see the faint sign of a strainer, possibly indicating that about 4.5 centimeters are missing. There are clear indications that at least 6 centimeters (the presumed width of the strainer) are missing from both left and right edges, since the figures at the left are cropped and the two figures at the right are too close to the edge. There are faint signs of cusping on the bottom edge, but since no strainer mark is visible at the bottom it might well be that at least 6 centimeters are missing there as well.

Analyses done of the gesso and preparation yielded results similar to those for *Circe* (cat. no. 3; for which, see Berrie and Fisher 1993 and Berrie 1994). A cross section at the trees showed a substrate of yellow-green under the trees rather than the dark blue often found. The x-radiograph (fig. 71) reveals changes in the area of the two ship hulls: one ship was originally longer, and the strip of land on which the two soldiers stand extended farther into the background. At least three of the small figures have been painted over. Pentimenti visible to the eye include part of a scaffold under the green in the foreground and a crouching figure in front of the woman with an infant on the far left.



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20. *Saint Jerome*

Dosso painted at least two other versions depicting the highly popular devotional subject of Saint Jerome in the desert: an earlier one, datable to about 1514 (previously the Silj collection, Rome), in which the melancholic figure of the saint is seen standing in a clearing in a dense forest; and a later one, of about 1528 (cat. no. 36), which shows the saint and his rustic habitation set against a distant panoramic landscape. In the present version, the penitent ascetic earnestly contemplates the image of his crucified Savior. In front of him is the Bible, which he is translating from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, and behind him his pet lion shuffles into the hut. That this picture held some special significance for Dosso seems likely, since it is the only one of his works to carry a signature. Characteristically, it appears not in writing but in the oblique and witty form of a rebus: the artist's name is conveyed by a capital D in the right foreground (detail) through which is threaded a large bone (in Italian, *osso*).

The first definite mention of the picture occurs

in the inventory of the collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria, which was taken in 1659 when the collection was incorporated into the imperial Habsburg holdings in Vienna.¹ A few years earlier, the painting was included in a view of the galleries in the Coudenberg Palace in Brussels by David Teniers the Younger (fig. 72), where it appears with a group of mainly Venetian pictures that, along with the rest of the London

Ca. 1518–19
Oil on canvas, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x
29 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (50.3 x 74.2 cm)
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Gemäldegalerie,
Vienna



20, detail

Provenance
Archduke Leopold
Wilhelm of Austria,
Coudenberg Palace,
Brussels (by 1651);
Archduke Leopold
Wilhelm of Austria,
Vienna (1659 inv., no.
243); Österreichische
Gallerie im Belvedere,
Vienna (by 1783)

References

- Mechel 1783, p. 78;
 L. N. Cittadella 1870,
 pp. 31–32; Engerth 1882,
 pp. 132–34; Schaeffer
 1891, pp. 236–37; Gruyer
 1897, vol. 2, pp. 271, 282;
 Berenson 1907, p. 211;
 Patzak 1908, pp. 256–59;
 Gardner 1911, p. 233;
 Zwanziger 1911,
 pp. 77–79; Mendelsohn
 1914, pp. 31, 43–46; Longhi
 1927a, (1967 ed., pp. 307,
 311); A. Venturi 1928,
 pp. 967–68; Berenson 1932,
 p. 176; Barbantini in
 Ferrara 1933, p. 166;
 Longhi 1934 (1956 ed.,
 p. 81); Lasareff 1941,
 pp. 132–33; Tietze-Conrat
 1948, p. 136; Suida 1949, p.
 282; Arslan 1957, p. 257;
 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches
 Museum 1960, p. 44;
 Longhi 1963, p. 58;
 Antonelli Trenti 1964,
 p. 413; Dreyer 1964–65,
 pp. 224–25, 363, pp. 22–23
 (1965); Mezzetti 1965a,
 pp. 25, 123; Middeldorf
 1965, p. 172; Puppi 1965;
 Berenson 1968, p. 114;
 Gibbons 1968, pp. 126–27,
 212; Friedmann 1980,
 p. 240; Ballarin in Paris
 1993, p. 408; Ballarin
 1994–95, pp. 40, 70, 309;
 Romani 1996, p. 95;
 Ciampitti 1998



Fig. 72. Teniers the Younger, *Gallery of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm*. Oil on canvas. Petworth House, West Sussex, The Egremont Collection (The National Trust). Dosso's *Saint Jerome* is in the third row, the second from the left.

collection of the duke of Hamilton, had been acquired by the archduke. It is possible that the *Saint Jerome* had likewise previously belonged to Hamilton and that he had bought it on the art market in Venice in the 1630s; so far, however, Dosso's picture has not been identified with any of the items listed in the letters and inventories relating to the various purchases made by Hamilton and Leopold Wilhelm.

In Teniers's view depicting the archduke's col-

lection, the *Saint Jerome* appears to extend farther to the left and top than it does today, and although Teniers clearly took certain liberties with the proportions and dimensions of the pictures represented in his gallery views, confirmation that Dosso's canvas has since been cut down is provided by an independent copy—again by Teniers—and by the thumbnail engraving in Stampart and Prenner's *Prodromus* of 1735.² Originally, then, the head of the lion was included at the left, and part



20, detail

of the roof of the hut was visible at the top. The two narrow strips of canvas added along the top and bottom edges may be interpreted as partial replacements for the trimmed areas. On the other hand, there is no physical evidence that the painting was transferred to canvas from wood; the mention of a wooden support in the 1659 inventory must be a mistake.

The refined execution of some sections, such as the saint's sensitively painted hair and beard, indicates that this picture, unlike the probably contemporary *Scene from a Legend* (cat. no. 19), was made for close viewing. The scene in the background, with its vertical, boldly abbreviated figures (detail), remains difficult to decipher; it seems to represent two hooded friars coming out of the church to address turbaned figures, and if so, it may be interpreted as illustrating the diffusion of the Christian message among the heathen. The church, in any case, is certainly intended as an ideological complement to Jerome's dwelling in the foreground, which, with its classical column fragments in the right foreground, is pictured as a pagan structure that has crumbled into decay.

Although Mendelsohn (1914) dated the picture to about 1510–12, and Berenson (1932, 1968) similarly called it "early," a majority of critics since Longhi (1927a) have assigned it to the early 1520s,³ likening it to the altarpiece for the Duomo of Modena that was installed in 1522 (fig. 1). Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) placed it slightly earlier, about 1517–18, a little before the date he gave the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* (fig. 6). The resemblance to the Duomo altarpiece remains more convincing: the pose of Saint Jerome's legs is nearly identical to that of the Duomo Baptist, while the vigorous thrust of Jerome's hips and shoulders is more fully classicizing than anything seen in the earlier altarpiece. The recent discovery that the Duomo altarpiece was largely executed several years before its installation, in 1518–20,⁴ suggests that a dating for the present work of about 1518 is in fact correct.

X-ray photographs reveal that the figure was painted over another at a right angle to it (fig. 73). In outline this earlier image is similar to the figure of Saint Bernardino at the apex of Battista's *Virgin and Child in Glory with Confraternity Members* (Galleria Estense, Modena), suggesting that it too represented Saint Bernardino.

1. "Ein Stuckh von Öhlfarb auff Holcz, warin der heyl: Hieronymus siczt in der Wüssten mit einen rothem Mantl, hat die rechte Handt aufgelähndter, in der linckhen ein Crucifix, vnd vor ihm ein offenes Buech, auf der linckhen Seithen ein Landtschäfftl, darin viel Volckh.... Von Tosso de Ferrara Original" (A piece in oil on wood, showing Saint Jerome in a red cloak sitting in the desert. He is leaning back on his right hand, he holds a crucifix in his left, and in front of him is an open book. To the left there is a little landscape with many people.... An original by Dosso of Ferrara). Berger 1883, p. C, no. 243.

2. Zimmerman 1888, p. viii.

3. Arslan 1957; Antonelli Trenti 1964; Mezzetti 1965a; Gibbons 1968.

4. Giovannini 1992.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of the painting is good, although the paint layer appears somewhat worn. The thread count of the canvas is 24 per centimeter vertically and 21 per centimeter horizontally. An addition about 1 centimeter wide on the bottom touches part of the large D with the bone. Another one on top is about 3 centimeters wide and, like that on the bottom, slightly tapered. The



Fig. 73. X-radiograph of *Saint Jerome* showing underlying figure at right angles to current composition

right edge of the painting shows an imprint of the strainer 4 centimeters wide, indicating that about 1 to 2 centimeters are missing. On the bottom there is an imprint 2 centimeters above the added strip, indicating that about 3 to 4 centimeters were missing when the strip was added. No imprint was found at the top; nor was any found at the left, where the cropping of the lion's head shows that at least 5 or 6 centimeters are lost. There is a streaky gray preparation, vertically applied, under the paint film. Faint signs of fingerprints appear

on Saint Jerome's hand that holds the crucifix, and of dabbing on the red cloak, which is painted over a lead white substrate.

The x-radiograph reveals beneath the visible composition an unrelated figure who might have been Saint Bernardino of Siena (fig. 73). His proper left hand is raised, and in his right he appears to be holding a book. The contours of the head are readily visible in the x-ray, as is the sky, which is painted right up to the silhouette. There seem to have been clouds or angels above his head.

21. *Dido*

Ca. 1518–20
Oil on canvas, $37\frac{5}{8} \times 29\frac{1}{2}$ in. (95.5×75 cm)
Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome
211/549

Provenance
Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, Rome (1603 inv., no. 256); Olimpia Aldobrandini, Rome (1626 inv., no. 129); Olimpia Aldobrandini Pamphilj (before 1665 inv., no. 256); her estate (1682 inv., no. 465); by descent to Giovanni Battista Pamphilj, Rome; Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, Rome (by 1794)

References
Tonci 1794, p. 231; Morelli 1890 (1892 ed., p. 217; 1991 ed., pp. 280–81); Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, pp. 262, 287; Schlosser 1900, p. 269; Berenson 1907, p. 211; Gardner 1911, p. 232; Zwanziger 1911, p. 55; L. Venturi 1913, p. 195; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 96–97, 188; A. Venturi 1928, pp. 943, 977.

This tragic heroine clasping a helmet is conventionally identified as Dido, queen of Carthage, whose suicide after being abandoned by her lover Aeneas is described in Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Although the first recorded linking of Dido with this picture is in Tonci's guide to the Doria Gallery of 1794, the identification is not implausible; Dosso may well have considered it appropriate to adorn a North African queen with a diadem carrying a pseudo-Kufic inscription. The idea is certainly more convincing than Schlosser's (1900) suggestion that the figure represents Bradamante, the warrior maiden of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*; although a helmet would be appropriate for her, she was not a Saracen but a Christian, and she did not suffer a tragic loss. However, another Ariostean candidate, proposed by Fumagalli (1933) and argued in detail by Langmuir (1981), remains a strong possibility: Fiordiligi, a Moorish princess who converted to Christianity. After her husband Brandimarte was killed by a blow that split his helmet (XLI:99–101), she had herself immured in his tomb and soon afterward died of grief (XLIII:182–85).

Whether the image is of Dido or Fiordiligi, it is certainly meant to inspire the viewer's sympathy and perhaps also to prompt musings on the cruelty of fate. Rather less certain is whether a precise philosophical message is intended, of the kind proposed by Del Bravo (1994), based on the humanist Mario Equicola's interpretation of the *Aeneid*. According to Del Bravo, Dido stands for the frequent assaults on Virtue by Fortune, in which the gods may or may not intervene to help.

Mezzetti (1965a) dated the picture to about 1530 and Gibbons (1968) to the early 1520s, but more convincing is Ballarin's date of about 1519. This half-length representation in an undefined, shadowy setting still belongs to the tradition of Giorgionesque portraiture, and the helmet, with its play of reflections, recalls similar helmets in two portraits of disputed authorship but indisputably Giorgionesque: *Francesco Maria della Rovere* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) and the so-called *Gattamelata* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence). The picture also shares with relatively early, strongly Venetianizing works of Dosso's, such as *Melissa* of about 1515–16 (cat. no. 12), a taste for heavy gold borders and fringes, striped fabrics, and sensuous, warm colors, with a particular preponderance of crimson. Dido, however, is posed more dynamically than *Melissa*, and with a rhetoric not yet present in Dosso's works before about 1518 but analogous to that of the central Saint Sebastian figure in the Modena altarpiece of 1518–21 (fig. 1). Ballarin related this development in Dosso's art to the arrival in Ferrara in late 1517 of one of Raphael's cartoons for the Stanza dell'Incendio, probably the *Fire in the Borgo*, which includes in the foreground similarly distraught, heroically conceived female figures.¹ In support of his argument Ballarin pointed to the sudden appearance of similar figures in contemporary works by other Ferrarese painters, such as Garofalo's *Massacre of the Innocents* of 1519 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara) or Ortolano's *Lamentation* (Galleria Borghese, Rome) of about the same date. Unlike these contemporaries, Dosso was able to assimilate addi-



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tional artistic developments through travel, and it is significant that in 1517 he visited not only Florence but Venice, where he would have observed the new grandeur of Titian's style in the *Assumption of the Virgin* (Santa Maria dei Frari, Venice).

A tentative hypothesis voiced by Gibbons (1968), that the picture is identifiable with a figure recorded in 1559 in Duke Alfonso's Camerino di Marmo in the Via Coperta, was disproved by Romani (in Ballarin 1994–95, p. 315), who pointed out that the figure in question was a sculpture. Still, the *Dido* is likely to have been an Este commission, and, described as a "picture of a woman

in a Moorish costume," it appears in the 1603 inventory of Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, heir of Lucrezia d'Este.² As subsequent inventories make clear, it continued to belong to the Aldobrandini family until after 1682, when it was inherited by the Pamphilj family.³ By the end of the eighteenth century it had acquired an attribution to Garofalo (Tonci 1794), but Morelli (1890) restored it to Dosso.

Over the years the picture has suffered from alterations of format and extensive repainting. The Aldobrandini inventory of 1682 describes it as an oval.⁴ Before its cleaning in about 1960, the figure

Berenson 1932, p. 175; Fumagalli 1933, p. 293; Bodmer 1943, p. XXXIX; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 38, 115; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, pp. 122, 205–6; Langmuir 1981, p. 144, n. 22; Shearman 1983, p. 92; Coccia 1991, pp. 285–86; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 411; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 43, 79, 315; Del Bravo 1994, p. 77; Romani 1996, p. 100

appeared to be looking out of a round-topped window with a wide foreground sill (illustrated in Gibbons 1968, pl. 31). Even today, a strip along the lower edge 1¼ inches wide is not original.

PH

1. Ballarin in Paris 1993; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 41. The imminent arrival of the cartoon is mentioned in a letter of November 1517 from Beltrando Costabili to Duke Alfonso: see Golzio 1936, pp. 62–63; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 122.
2. “Un ritratto d’una donna vestita alla moresca, di mano del Dosso da Ferrara.” D’Onofrio 1964, p. 207, no. 256.
3. 1626: Della Pergola 1960, pp. 433, no. 129, 442; before 1665: D’Onofrio 1964, p. 207, no. 256; 1682: Della Pergola 1962–63, p. 83, no. 465.
4. “Un quadro in tela ovato.” Della Pergola 1962–63, p. 83, no. 465.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is very good. It was not possible to take new measurements of the painting. The deep red cloak shows signs of dabbing with a cloth, and shadows painted in red mixed with a dark pigment, similar to those in the *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41). The only visible pentimento is in the hand, which originally was narrower. Numerous elements in this painting are characteristic of Dosso’s work: the sharp, detailed fringes of the shawl, painted in relief; the richly colored ribbon; the carefully executed helmet; the attention to the details of eyelashes, eyebrows, and strands of hair.

Learned Men of Classical Antiquity

22a. Learned Man with a Compass and a Globe

22b. Learned Man with a Book 22c. Learned Man with a Tablet 22d. Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books

22a. *Learned Man with a Compass and a Globe*
Ca. 1520–22
Oil on canvas, 54⅞ × 69 in. (139.5 × 175.2 cm)
The Barbara Piasecka Johnson Collection

22b. *Learned Man with a Book*
Ca. 1520–22
Oil on canvas, 60½ × 47½ in. (154 × 121 cm)
The Barbara Piasecka Johnson Collection

22c. *Learned Man with a Tablet*
Ca. 1520–22
Oil on canvas, 57 × 46¾ in. (144.8 × 118.8 cm)

These four canvases, together with *Learned Man with a Compass, Ruler, and Tablet* in a private collection (fig. 74) and probably others in the series now lost, must originally have made up a decorative cycle for a room in one of the Este residences. In no other works by Dosso is the debt to Michelangelo, in particular to the *Ignudi* of the Sistine ceiling, so explicitly acknowledged. Each of the five surviving canvases represents a single male nude or seminude of powerful physique in a complex, twisting pose; in all five the color range is limited; and, unusually for Dosso, landscape is all but excluded. At the same time, the figures lack the abstracting idealization of Michelangelo’s *Ignudi* and retain the realistic look of actual studio models. Also particular to Dosso is the warmly atmospheric chiaroscuro that envelops the figures, softening contours and creating mysterious pools of shadow, and the flaming reds and golds of the draperies, colors that in the *Learned Man with a*



Fig. 74. Dosso Dossi, *Learned Man with a Compass, Ruler, and Tablet*. Oil on canvas. Private collection



22a. *Learned Man with a Compass and a Globe*

Compass and a Globe (22a) extend to a spectacular sunset sky. The romantic conception of these ancient philosophers and mathematicians is once again characteristic of Dosso, who imagines them inhabiting a barren world, still barely formed near the beginning of time.

Nothing is known of the original setting of the canvases, which first came to public attention between the years 1965 and 1984. None of the five has preserved its original shape and dimensions, and although it is likely that they were once placed around the upper walls of a small room, perhaps a library, it is impossible to form any more precise idea of their arrangement. All at one time had trapezoidal tops and later, by means of additions, were made into rectangles; in the case of the *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books* (22d), these additions have recently (1983) been removed. But

the irregular trapezoidal profile is hardly likely to have been original either, and it remains unclear whether the canvases were rectangular or arched to fit within the lunette of a vault. All must have been about 5 feet high, and the three vertical canvases about 4 feet wide; the *Learned Man with a Compass, Ruler, and Tablet* (now 55½ x 59½ inches), the only work in which the figure's feet are cut by the frame, may originally have been as wide as the other horizontal picture, *Learned Man with a Compass and a Globe*. Since the three vertical canvases are lit from the right and the two horizontal ones from the left, it is possible that they were grouped opposite one another; but the likely loss of other canvases in the set makes any such speculation hazardous. Consistent with a high placement, relatively distant from the spectator, are the breadth of handling and suppression of small-scale

Inscribed lower right
(false inscription):
TITIANVS P.
The Chrysler Museum,
Norfolk, Virginia,
Gift of Walter P.
Chrysler Jr. 71.641

22d. *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books*
Ca. 1520–22
Oil on canvas, 56½ x
48¼ in. (142.5 x
122.5 cm)
Agnes Etherington Art
Centre, Queen's
University, Kingston,
Ontario, Gift of Drs.
Alfred and Isabel Bader,
1984



22b. *Learned Man with a Book*



22c. *Learned Man with a Tablet*

TITIANVS P



22d. *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books*

detail. However, as is the case with his frescoed friezes at the castle of Buonconsiglio in Trent, Dosso shows little interest in illusionism and does not present his figures as if seen from below.

The subject of the series is equally difficult to determine. When the first pair of pictures was published by Middeldorf in 1965, it was thought to represent evangelists because the figure in *Learned Man with a Book* (22b) has a halo, perhaps identifying him as Saint John on Patmos, and the subject of *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books* has a lion, perhaps identifying him as Saint Mark. The issue was then complicated by the emergence of the three other, unquestionably profane, figures. Calvesi (1969b) identified the one depicted in *Learned Man with a Tablet* (22c) as Pythagoras, but did not attempt to name his companions. Del Bravo (1994)—who believes that Dosso's subject matter was in general pervasively influenced by the Mantuan court humanist Mario Equicola—interpreted the nudes and their attributes as symbolic of the hidden mysteries contained within different philosophical systems, and the combination of sacred and profane themes as expressive of a universal aspiration toward divine beauty and truth. But, apart from the fact that there is no real evidence the series was conceived in such elevated Neoplatonic terms, the original two figures are by no means necessarily Christian in character: the lion, which unlike the attribute of Saint Mark is not winged, may not be original (McTavish in Kingston 1988–89), and therefore the authenticity of the halo in the “Saint John” also needs to be investigated.

What remains more plausible is the interpretation put forward by Federico Zeri¹ that the cycle portrays the Seven Liberal Arts: the *trivium* of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric, and the *quadrivium* of Geometry, Arithmetic, Astrology, and Music. Thus, in this reading, the *Learned Man with a Compass and a Globe* (on the globe at least two signs of the zodiac, Scorpio and Capricorn, may be discerned) represents Astrology; the *Learned Man with a Tablet* (the tablet is inscribed with arabic numerals) represents Arithmetic; and the *Learned Man with a Compass, Ruler, and Tablet* (the tablet is inscribed with squares and circles) represents Geometry. The *Learned Man with a Book* and the *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books* could plausibly represent Grammar and Rhetoric, although here the attributes are less specific. One possible difficulty with Zeri's theory is that tradi-

tionally the Liberal Arts were always portrayed as female figures—as indeed Dosso himself portrayed them, half-length, in the Stua del Camin Nero at Trent in 1531–32. Yet Dosso was a painter who frequently defied convention, and here he might certainly have opted for full-length male nudes rather than females precisely because the commission presented an opportunity to emulate Michelangelo.

Developing Zeri's theory, McTavish (in Kingston 1988–89) tentatively but intriguingly suggested that the missing *Music* is identifiable with the *Allegory of Music* in Florence (cat. no. 25). Arguing against this idea is the picture's size, somewhat larger than any of the *Learned Men*, and its departure from the standard format—it shows four figures, including two female nudes. On the other hand, in its pictorial style and its primitivistic visualization of antiquity, the work is very close indeed. It remains possible that the cycle of (six?) *Learned Men* was intended to provide a sort of supporting cast for the more elaborately conceived *Allegory of Music*.

There have been two distinct schools of thought regarding the date of the *Learned Men*. The first, led by Mezzetti (1965a) and including Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), regarded the style of the works as the direct reflection of a visit to Rome supposedly made by Dosso in 1520. Mezzetti emphasized their Michelangelism, and also agreed with Middeldorf in seeing the poses in the *Learned Man with a Book* and the *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books* as echoes of Raphael's designs for, respectively, Lorenzetto's sculptures *Jonah* and *Elijah* in the Chigi chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome. For Gibbons (1968), in contrast (followed by Carlo Volpe),² the *Learned Men* were late works dating from about 1540; to support this view he likened the “gross proportions and twisted moodiness” of the *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books* to qualities of *Saint John the Baptist and Saint George* (fig. 15), datable on circumstantial evidence to the late 1530s. But the paint handling in the *Learned Men* is much softer than that in Dosso's late works, and the shadows lighter; and Mezzetti and Ballarin were certainly right to relate their style instead to that of the Modena altarpiece, installed in 1522 (fig. 1), and, partially, to that of the Aeneas frieze of about the same date (cat. no. 24). Nor is it particularly clear that Dosso had just been in Rome. He had already seen the Sistine ceiling on his probable visit in

Provenances

22a: A. L. Nicolson, Bournemouth (by ca. 1920); sale, Christie's, London (April 13, 1927, no. 124, and December 16, 1927, no. 155); Matthiesen, London (1984); sale, Christie's, London (July 9, 1993, no. 65)

22b: A. L. Nicolson, Bournemouth (by ca. 1920); sale, Christie's, London (May 17, 1935, no. 71); Arthur Rosner, Tel Aviv (by 1965, until 1978); Matthiesen, London (1984)

22c: Don Marcello Massarenti, Rome; acquired with his collection by Henry Walters, Baltimore (1902); Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (no. 1676; until 1951); Walter P. Chrysler Jr., New York; his gift to The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia (1971)

22d: A. L. Nicolson, Bournemouth (by ca. 1920); sale, Christie's, London (May 17, 1935, no. 71); Arthur Rosner, Tel Aviv; Alfred Bader, Milwaukee (by 1965); gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader to Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario (1984)

References

22a: London 1984, pp. 89–90; McTavish in Kingston 1988–89, pp. 12–13; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 411; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 44–45, 79–80, 323; Del Bravo 1994, p. 80; Romani 1996, p. 99

22b: Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 25–26, 72, 92; Middeldorf 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, pp. 138–39, 188–89, 209–10; London 1984, pp. 89–90; McTavish in Kingston 1988–89, pp. 12–13; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 411; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 44–45, 79–80, 323; Romani 1996, p. 99

22c: Rome, Palazzo Accoramboni 1897, vol. 1, p. 64, no. 357 (as Titian); Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 25–26, 72; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, pp. 138–39, 192–93, 209–10; Calvesi 1969b, p. 172; London 1984, pp. 89–90; McTavish in Kingston 1988–89, pp. 12–13; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 411; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 44–45, 79–80, 324; Romani 1996, p. 99

22d: Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 25–26, 72, 97; Middeldorf 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 138–39, 188–89; London 1984, pp. 89–90; McTavish in Kingston 1988–89, pp. 10–13; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 411; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 44–45, 79–80, 324; Romani 1996, p. 99

1513; the reflections of Michelangelo and Raphael in the *Learned Men* remain generic rather than specific; and a similar fascination with Herculean nudes in complex poses was widespread in Northern Italy in the years around 1520. The interest is evident, for example, in Titian's work at that moment, as in the *Saint Sebastian* panel of his Averoldi polyptych (Santi Nazaro e Celso, Brescia); as pointed out in this connection by Ballarin (1994–95), Dosso and Titian visited Mantua together in November 1519. Also highly suggestive is the visual comparison Ballarin makes (vol. 2, pls. 605, 606) between Dosso's *Learned Man with a Scroll and Two Books* and an apostle by Correggio in the cupola of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma (ca. 1520–21); it is not necessary to infer from this comparison, however, that there is a direct connection between the two works.

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1. See London 1984.
2. Ibid.

23. *Saints Cosmas and Damian*

Ca. 1520–22
Oil on canvas, 88½ × 61¾ in (225 × 157 cm)
Inscribed (on the vase):
ONTO. D.
Galleria Borghese,
Rome 22

Provenance
Ospedale di Sant'Anna,
Ferrara; Cardinal Scipione
Borghese, Rome
(1607–33); by descent to
Giovanni Battista
Borghese, Rome (1693
inv., no. 160);⁸ Quadreria
Borghese, Palazzo di
Campo Marzio, Rome,

The principal figures in this genrelike scene are the twin brothers Cosmas and Damian, early Christian martyrs and the patron saints of physicians. The patient whose back is toward the viewer serves as their attribute, identifying them. The saints, here depicted as dental surgeons, have just extracted a tooth from the patient's mouth; the glass held aloft, containing the tooth, adds further circumstantial detail to this representation of a medical treatment.¹ Gibbons (1968) suggested that the woman on the right is a nurse, but her fashionable dress and over-the-shoulder glance conform to a formula for portraiture popularized by Giorgione and Titian in the years around 1510, and she may instead be the subject of a donor portrait. If that is the case, it is possible that the patient also represents a specific individual, perhaps her husband, and that the couple commissioned the work as an ex-voto following his longed-for cure.

The picture was presumably painted for the Hospital of Sant'Anna in Ferrara, from which it was acquired by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in

1607.² Obviously the medical theme would have been entirely appropriate for this setting; it remains unclear, however, whether the picture was originally placed in one of the hospital dormitories or in the adjoining church. Confusion is created by Guarini's (1621) comment that the altar at the end of the women's dormitory displayed a painting of Cosmas and Damian by the Dossi brothers.³ In fact, by 1621 Dosso's picture had been missing from the hospital for fourteen years; and, as was pointed out by Boschini,⁴ Guarini was probably referring instead to an altarpiece by Bastianino, the *Virgin and Child and Saint Anne in Glory with Saints Cosmas and Damian*, that later Ferrarese sources record was in the church of Sant'Anna.⁵ Moreover, it is not easy to decide on the basis of the visual evidence whether Dosso's picture was meant to function as an altarpiece or was painted simply to hang on the wall in some public place. The composition lacks the hierarchical structure and solemn mood customary for liturgical images; however, its scale is imposing



(ca. 1790 inv., no. 50, as by Paolo Veronese);⁹
Borghese family collection, Rome (1833 legal inv., p. 34, as by Andrea Mantegna); Galleria Borghese, Rome

References

Manilli 1650, p. 68;
Montelatici 1700, p. 257;
Morelli 1890 (1892 ed., pp. 215–16; 1991 ed., p. 225); A. Venturi 1891, p. 428; A. Venturi 1893, p. 38; Gruber 1897, vol. 2, pp. 271, 286; Berenson 1907, p. 210; Gardner 1911, pp. 159; Zwanziger 1911, p. 114; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 119–20; A. Venturi 1928, p. 977; Berenson 1932, p. 175; Della Pergola 1955, p. 32; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 29–30, 110; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, pp. 137–38, 196–97; Mezzetti and Mattaliano 1980–83, vol. 1, p. 24; Marcon, Maddalo, and Marcolini in Ferrara 1983, p. 95; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 412; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 46, 81–82, 329–30; Ciammitti 1998

enough for an altarpiece, and Dosso was never afraid of responding to a traditional assignment with an unconventional solution.

No critic ventured to suggest a date for this picture before Mezzetti (1965a) grouped it with the Della Sale altarpiece of the later 1520s (fig. 76),⁶ comparing the contorted, planar pose of the patient here with that of Saint Bartholomew in the Della Sale painting. Gibbons (1968) dated *Saints Cosmas and Damian* even later, to the second half of the 1530s, and likened the figures to those in the unquestionably late *Saint John the Baptist and Saint George* (fig. 15).⁷ But the modeling of form in Dosso's late works is much harsher, the colors cooler, and the shadows blacker than in *Saints Cosmas and Damian*; and the woman's costume seen here would be impossibly archaic for the 1530s. In fact, as Ballarin (in Paris 1993) recognized, this picture belongs to Dosso's self-consciously Michelangelesque moment at the very beginning of the 1520s, a period when he also produced the Modena altarpiece (fig. 1), the *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* (cat. no. 22), and the *Allegory of Music* in Florence (cat. no. 25). Especially when compared with the splendor of the altarpiece, the execution of *Saints Cosmas and Damian* appears somewhat perfunctory, and it is possible, as Ballarin suggested, that Battista, who was back from Rome and in Ferrara by the summer of 1520, had a share in the execution. On the other hand, it is impossible to pinpoint what Battista's participation might have been, and in the end there is no compelling reason to doubt that Dosso was himself largely responsible for the execution.

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1. That the picture's specific subject is oral surgery was first recognized by S. Barchiesi (published in Coliva and Barchiesi forthcoming); see the discussion in Anna Coliva's essay, pp. 77–78)
2. The circumstances of the acquisition have been elucidated by Marcon, Maddalo, and Marcolini in Ferrara 1983; see also Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 329–30. The picture was successfully procured for the cardinal by his agent Ezio Bentivoglio, despite vigorous local opposition by the bishop of Ferrara and by the *giudice dei savi*, Battista Muzzarelli.
3. “Nell'altare in capo al dormitorio delle Donne, un Cosmo, e Damiano de' Dossi di singolare vaghezza.” Guarini 1621, p. 212.
4. Boschini in Baruffaldi 1697–1722 (1844–46 ed., vol. 1, p. 292, n. 1).

5. The picture by Bastianino was subsequently dismembered: see Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 329–30.

6. For the Della Sale altarpiece, installed in March 1527 and so probably largely executed in the previous year, see the biographical essay above, p. 11.

7. For the dating of the two panels, see the biographical essay above, p. 14; and for further arguments that *Saints Cosmas and Damian* is from the last years of Dosso's career, see Anna Coliva's essay, p. 77–78.

8. Della Pergola 1964–65, p. 227.

9. Rinaldis 1937, p. 223.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

Although the painting is not clean, its condition is very good. The canvas is a plain weave with 13 to 14 threads per centimeter horizontally and 19 threads per centimeter vertically, with the stitches of the vertical seam clearly visible. There is an imprint from the strainer 6 centimeters from the left edge—which is probably intact—and another on the bottom about 2 centimeters from the edge—where probably about 4 centimeters are missing. The evidence on the right is unclear, but the cropping of the lower figure's knees indicates some loss. No imprint can be seen at the top edge, although that of a diagonal corner reinforcement about 4 centimeters wide is visible at the top right (another is found at the bottom left). The saint's red cloak, similar to those in cat. nos. 12 and 41, has highlights painted with a brilliant red preparation, presumably vermilion, and a red lake glaze over it; the shadows are painted in various shades of red mixed with black. The x-radiograph shows, particularly beneath the faces, a very uneven lead white layer, laid out in a rough crisscross pattern not found in other paintings by Dosso. Only the woman's face is modeled more carefully, in a color containing much lead white, while the foreground man's face is practically invisible. The only significant pentimento, beneath the saint in the center of the composition, shows that originally he was placed farther down. Visible in infrared are another pentimento under the foreground man's leg and a fine contour underdrawing beneath his face, especially apparent around the mouth. (See also the discussion by Anna Coliva, pp. 77–78.)

(Some information drawn from the Condition Report by M. Cardinali, M. B. De Ruggieri, and C. Falcucci of EMMEBICI, Rome.)

The Aeneas Frieze

24a. *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields*

24b. *The Sicilian Games*

These two canvases and probably the *Scene from a Legend* (cat. no. 19) are the sole survivors from a series originally containing ten scenes of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which Dosso painted to decorate the frieze area of Duke Alfonso's Camerino. As Langmuir (1976) observed, the painter's treatment of his literary text is lyrical rather than epic; the relatively small figures are dressed in modern or fantasy costumes rather than *all'antica* and are placed in lush, expansive landscapes. And because Dosso approaches the particulars of Virgil's poem with a characteristically improvisatory freedom, not all the details in the scenes are easy to interpret.

The principal decoration of the Camerino was a series of five or more large-scale paintings depicting Bacchanals, including Giovanni Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* (fig. 18), Titian's *Worship of Venus* and *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (figs. 21, 22), Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (fig. 20), and a now-lost contribution by Dosso (for which, see pp. 35–36).¹ At different times Alfonso had also hoped to secure Bacchanals from the Central Italian masters Raphael, Michelangelo, and Fra Bartolommeo. Although for various reasons these projected works came to nothing, the completed room nevertheless represented one of the most distinguished pictorial ensembles in all Italian Renaissance art. While documentation of its history is patchy, there is evidence that Alfonso was making plans for the decoration as early as 1511;² between July and October 1515, extensive preparatory refurbishment was undertaken in the room destined to be the Camerino;³ in October 1519 Titian visited Ferrara to install his *Worship of Venus*; and the *Bacchus and Ariadne* was installed in 1523 and 1524–25.⁴ There is also circumstantial evidence that Dosso's own *Bacchanal* was in progress in September 1519.⁵

The earliest direct reference to the Aeneas frieze is a somewhat garbled description of it by Vasari in his Life of Titian (1568): "During the year 1514 Duke Alfonso of Ferrara caused to be decorated a small chamber for which he commissioned

the local painter Dosso to paint various compartments showing the stories of Aeneas, Mars, and Venus, and, in a grotto Vulcan with two smiths at the forge."⁶ Unlike the Bacchanals, which were removed from the Camerino in 1598, the frieze remained in place until 1608, when all ten sections were acquired by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in Rome.⁷ Writing to the cardinal in March 1608, immediately before they were removed, the papal legate to Ferrara, Innocenzo Massimo, described them as follows: "These consist of ten pieces forming the frieze of a small chamber; each is one *canna* wide by three *palmi* high; they represent different deeds by Aeneas, as recounted by Virgil; and they are very beautiful."⁸ In 1612 a frame maker and gilder was paid by Cardinal Borghese for reframing the frieze in a room of his palace called the Camera dei Bronzi;⁹ by the time a Borghese inventory was taken in 1693, however, the ten sections were hanging separately in different rooms.¹⁰ The descriptions in the inventory are brief, but one entry clearly refers to the Birmingham canvas: "A canvas 7 *palmi* long, with various figures, and dead goats hanging from a tree; from no. 2, with a gilt frame; by Dosso of Ferrara."¹¹ By the process of elimination, the Ottawa canvas may be identified with a more vaguely worded entry: "An oblong canvas with meadows, and various nude and clothed figures; from no. 2, with a gilt frame; by Dosso of Ferrara."¹² The canvases are not mentioned in a Borghese inventory of about 1790;¹³ they must have been sold off sometime during the course of the eighteenth century.

During the ten years in which the Camerino was being decorated, a number of payments to Dosso and his team for their work in the ducal apartments are recorded; but the notations are regrettably unspecific, and it is by no means always clear to which room in the suite they refer. An additional complication is the fact that a critical consensus has still not been reached about which room in the castle complex was the Camerino.

24a. *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields*
Ca. 1522
Oil on canvas, 22 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 66 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (57.5 × 167.8 cm)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa 14666

24b. *The Sicilian Games*
Ca. 1522
Oil on canvas, 23 × 66 in. (58.5 × 167.5 cm)
The Trustees of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, the University of Birmingham

Provenance
24a: Castello Estense, Ferrara, Camerino of Alfonso I (until 1608); Cardinal Scipione Borghese, Rome (1608–33); Prince Giovanni Battista Borghese, Rome (1693 inv., probably no. 357); Tomás Harris, London (1932); Sir Kenneth Clark, London (1932–64); Thomas Agnew and Sons, London (1964); National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (from 1964)

24b: Castello Estense, Ferrara, Camerino of Alfonso I (until 1608); Cardinal Scipione Borghese, Rome (from 1608); Prince Giovanni



24a



24b



Battista Borghese, Rome (1693 inv., probably no. 112); Tomás Harris, London (from 1932); Sir Kenneth Clark, London (1932–64); Thomas Agnew and Sons, London (1964); Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham (from 1964)

References

- 24a: Gibbons and Puppi 1965, pp. 313–15; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 19–22, 74, 105; Mezzetti 1965b; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, 132, 167–68, 193; Hope 1971, p. 643; Fehl 1975 (1992 ed., pp. 49, 355–56, n. 10); Langmuir 1976, pp. 158–59; Goodgal 1978, pp. 170–73; Shapley 1979, pp. 164–65; Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, pp. 114–15; B. L. Brown 1987, pp. 47–49; Cavalli-Björkman 1987, pp. 75, 89; Laskin and Pantazzi 1987, pp. 94–95; Buzzoni 1988, p. 266; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 411–12; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 45, 80–81, 235–36; Del Bravo 1994, pp. 73–75, 81
- 24b: Gibbons and Puppi 1965, pp. 313–15; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 19–22, 74; Mezzetti 1965b; Berenson 1968, p. 110; Gibbons 1968, 132, 167–68; Hope 1971, p. 643; Fehl 1975 (1992 ed., pp. 49, 355–56, n. 10); Langmuir 1976, pp. 158–59; Goodgal 1978, pp. 170–73; Shapley 1979, pp. 164–65; Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, pp. 114–15; B. L. Brown 1987, pp. 47–49; Cavalli-Björkman 1987, pp. 75, 89; Laskin and

According to Hope,¹⁴ the Camerino was the room measuring about 7.30 by 3.25 meters (roughly 24 by 10½ feet) situated next to the duke's bedroom in the Via Coperta, the bridgelike structure linking the Este castle with the palace. If Hope is correct, Mezzetti (1965a) may also be correct in suggesting that three payments made to Dosso and Battista in August and November 1520 and January 1521 for "pictures for the duke's apartments in the Via Coperta"¹⁵ were for the Aeneas frieze. But according to Goodgal,¹⁶ the Camerino was instead a room measuring 6.16 by 4.42 meters (about 20 by 13 feet) in the ravelin above the castle moat—a location between the castle and the Via Coperta. The arguments for and against these different positions are complex and cannot be fully rehearsed here. Among the many considerations in favor of Goodgal's identification is the fact that the Aeneas frieze, which consisted of ten compartments each about 170 centimeters or 5½ feet wide, plus the necessary framing, adding perhaps a meter of width on each wall, would fit much more neatly and logically into the room she proposes—where two sections could hang on each short wall and three on each long wall—than it would in the room described by Hope. Furthermore, the record of a payment to Dosso of March 4, 1521, apparently unknown to Goodgal, specifically states that the duke's "Camarino" is in the castle (not the Via Coperta).¹⁷ According to this document, Dosso was paid for painting "piedi 109 de cornixotti"—109 feet, or about 44 meters, of painted molding—which presumably ran along the top and bottom of the frieze; it is significant that this length is very close to double the perimeter of the room in the ravelin. Since a date of about 1520 for the Birmingham and Ottawa canvases is perfectly plausible on stylistic grounds (see below), Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) may well be correct in linking this document to the installation of the Aeneas frieze in the Camerino.¹⁸

It is unlikely that each compartment or pair of compartments of the frieze corresponded, either physically or ideologically, to one of the Bacchanal paintings (there were probably five to eight of them) that hung below. Any thematic relationship between the frieze and the large-scale canvases is likely to have been of a more general kind. For example, as Fehl pointed out,¹⁹ the Bacchanals were celebrations of the power of Venus as well as of Bacchus; and since Aeneas was

the son of Venus, it was appropriate that his story be depicted in the frieze above. A kind of local patriotism may also have been a factor in choosing to illustrate the *Aeneid*; Langmuir (1976) noted that according to a local historical tradition, when the Trojans arrived in Italy four centuries before the foundation of Rome, they settled first in Emilia, and Virgil himself, a native of the neighboring province of Mantua, had close associations with this part of the Po valley. Del Bravo (1994) proposed that the Mantuan court humanist Mario Equicola drew up the program for the Aeneas frieze, as he did for the cycle of Bacchanals; but also worth noting is Shearman's attractive suggestion that responsibility for the revised program for the decoration of the Camerino passed in 1518 to no less a literary figure than Ariosto.²⁰ What is not very convincing is Del Bravo's insistence on the moralizing purpose of the frieze, which he interprets as a series of lessons on how to preserve steadfast virtue in the face of fickle fortune. It does not seem likely that the frieze had any particularly comprehensive or systematic scheme; for example, Gibbons was probably wrong in maintaining that each of the scenes corresponded to a single book of the *Aeneid* (of which there are, in any case, twelve).

Of the pair of existing paintings, the one closer to the literary text of the *Aeneid* is the Ottawa picture, which represents Aeneas's visit to the Elysian fields—the "pleasant green places in the Fortunate Woods"—described toward the end of Book VI (vi:635–705).²¹ The episodes and figures depicted include the arrival of Aeneas, bearing the golden bough and walking in the company of the Cumæan Sibyl, on the far left; Orpheus with his lyre (here transformed into a Renaissance *lira da braccio*, or viol) in the grove to the right of them; the ghostly horses of the dead warriors, "grazing free about the plain"; and the happy shades, variously engaged in dancing, singing, and wrestling. In the middle ground is the river Eridanus, which, as Gibbons and Puppi (1965) have pointed out, clearly refers to the mythical origins of the river Po and hence also to the glory of the Este dynasty. It is possible, as Fehl (1975) suggested, that the turbaned old man in the center foreground is Aeneas's father, Anchises, who has just descended into the Elysian fields; or, as Gibbons and Puppi thought, this figure may be the poet Musaeus, who gave directions to the visitors searching for Anchises. Yet to insist on either identification is

probably to take Dosso's imaginative evocation of Virgil's text too literally, for the figure is hardly more specific than his various companions.

The Birmingham picture is an even less exact illustration, and scholars disagree about exactly what its various episodes represent. Federico Zeri²² recognized that the principal scene in the right foreground depicts an episode in Book V of the *Aeneid*: as part of the Sicilian games held to mark the anniversary of the death of Anchises, five of Aeneas's youthful companions competed in a race. Close to the winning post, Nisus slipped on a patch of bullock's blood left over from a sacrifice. Realizing that he himself could no longer win, Nisus deliberately tripped the runner in second place, Salius, allowing his own friend Euryalus to take the prize (v:315–35). Dosso shows only four runners: Euryalus to the left, looking back; the fallen Nisus and Salius (one of them looking distinctly middle-aged), inspecting the offending slippery patch; and between them presumably Diores, “always with a foot grazing the heel of Helymus and a shoulder thrusting forward towards him.” In the right middle ground is a group of Sicilian spectators, who “filled the shore with their gay gathering, all wanting to see Aeneas and his men” (v:107–8).

Gibbons (1968) thought that the event pictured in the left foreground was the ritual sacrifice made by Aeneas before the opening of the games (v:96–103) and that the plume of smoke in the right background signaled the burning of the Trojan fleet, which the vengeful Juno and her accomplice Iris (seen together in the sky) brought about while Aeneas and his companions were involved in the games. Noting that the smoke rises not from the sea but from within the town, Del Bravo (1994) thought that the reference was to a passage where Aeneas looks back to see the smoke of Dido's funeral pyre (v:3–7). Mezzetti (1965a) interpreted the activities in the left foreground as the preparation of a meal by the Trojans when they were first shipwrecked off Libya (i:80–94); the scene on the hill beyond, with swans seen flying above, as the encounter of Aeneas and Achates, with Venus disguised as a hunter (i:305–401); and the figures in the sky as Jupiter and Mercury discussing Aeneas's forthcoming visit to Dido (i:297–304). Mezzetti was certainly right to read the left foreground scene as the preparation of a meal and not a sacrifice: the man under the tree is using a pestle and mortar, and the man at

the stone table is slicing open a fish taken from the tub beside him. She was also correct in reading the two heads in the sky, with their exotically feathered headdresses, as both male. Yet it seems unlikely that Dosso would juxtapose a group of episodes from Book I on the left with the much later events of Book V on the right; the meal is more likely to be the nine-day feast ordered by Aeneas at the conclusion of the games (v:762–76). Perhaps the figures in the sky are meant to allude to the related episode in which Anchises descended from heaven to urge his son to move on to Italy (v:722–45); Aeneas wears just such a plumed helmet in the left side of the Elysian fields painting. More difficult to interpret is the scene on the hill; however, it cannot represent Aeneas and his companion with Venus, since the two figures in white are both obviously female. Thus it seems clear that, as with *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields*, Dosso approached his text in a spirit of fantasy, and minor background details may simply be without narrative significance.

The documented history of the decoration of Alfonso's Camerino provides only a general idea of the likely date of the Aeneas frieze; a more precise dating of the Birmingham and Ottawa canvases remains dependent on internal stylistic evidence. Indeed, Gibbons dated both pictures to the late 1520s (thus implying that the frieze was painted only after the last of Titian's Bacchanals had been installed) on the grounds that the thick-set, muscular physiques and complicated torsion of the foreground figures in both canvases already reveal the influence of Giulio Romano, who arrived in Mantua from Rome in 1524. More convincingly, Mezzetti (1965a, 1965b) and Ballarin (1994–95) dated the works slightly earlier, to about 1519–20, connecting them with a self-consciously Michelangelesque phase in Dosso's development that is represented above all by the documented Modena altarpiece of 1518–21 (fig. 1) and also by the series of *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* (cat. no. 22). Ballarin's comparison of the old man in the center of *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields* with the figure in the *Learned Man with a Compass, Ruler, and Tablet*²³ (fig. 74) is particularly apt. Mezzetti and Ballarin also related Dosso's figure style in the two Aeneas paintings to the antiquarian fantasies of the Bolognese painter Amico Aspertini, and, indeed, Aspertini's highly imaginative interpretation of sarcophagus reliefs and his evident interest in the recently discovered

Pantazzi 1987, pp. 94–95;
Buzzoni 1988, p. 266;
Ballarin in Paris 1993,
pp. 411–12; Ballarin
1994–95, pp. 45, 80–81,
236–37; Del Bravo 1994,
pp. 73–75, 81

grotesques of the Golden House of Nero in Rome do seem to be echoed here in Dosso's decidedly eccentric conception of the nude. Mezzetti (1965b) drew attention to the differing characters of the two canvases, *The Sicilian Games* being the more violent (despite Dosso's characteristic failure to convey any real sense of rapid movement) and *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields* the more idyllic, but this difference surely reflects the dissimilarity of the subjects and not a discrepancy of date.

X-ray photographs of *The Sicilian Games* have revealed numerous pentimenti, the most significant of which is the transformation of a figure who wore hose and looked toward the runners, into the turbaned man with a white beard and long coat. Perhaps the change was made to reinforce the temporal disjunction between the two groups of figures.

PH

1. Described by Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 5, p. 417) in his Life of Girolamo da Carpi as a "Baccanaria d'uomini" (Bacchanal of men), this picture was mentioned by Annibale Roncaglia in 1598 as a "pittura con figure d'uomeni et di donne di mano delli dossi" (painting with the figures of men and women, by the Dossi). See A. Venturi 1882, p. 113. Like the Bacchanals by Bellini and Titian, it was acquired by Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini; in his inventory of 1603 it is described as "un quadro grande di più Dei con un montone, un camaleonte, et un armatura, del Dosso" (a large picture with several gods, a ram, a chameleon, and armor, by Dosso). See D'Onofrio 1964, p. 162, no. 154. It is last recorded in an Aldobrandini Pamphilj inventory of before 1665 as "un quadro in tela grande con diverse donne, e Vulcano da una banda, e vi è un montone, et una figura dorme, alto p. sei, e tre quarti largo similmente con cornice dorata segnato del Dossi" (a large picture on canvas with several women, Vulcan at one side, a ram, and a sleeping figure; six and three-quarters *palmi* high, width the same, with a gilt frame; signed by Dosso). See D'Onofrio 1964, p. 162, no. 153. Various efforts have been made to identify the lost picture with extant works: with a *Bacchanal* in the National Gallery, London, no. 5279 (fig. 2), for example, although its attribution to Dosso may now be discarded, together with that of other works of the "Longhi group"; or with the Horne *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25). The painting has also been confused with another lost picture by Dosso that formed part of the Aeneas frieze in the *studiolo* (see n. 6). Holberton 1987, p. 60, suggested that Dosso's *Bacchanal* represents Vulcan's return to Olympus; Del Bravo 1994, p. 73, thought that it showed five young hunters in a meadow, as described in the third of

Philostratus the Younger's *Imagines*.

2. Shearman 1987, pp. 212–17.
3. Goodgal 1978, pp. 165, 188, no. 33. Payments for the work are listed under the following heading: "Spesa dela galaria apreso il studio dove fa fare il Signore il camerino" (Expenses for the gallery next to the *studio* where his lordship is having his *camerino* prepared). As Goodgal explains, the room called the *studio* is the Studio di Marmo, built in 1508–11, so called because it was decorated with marble reliefs by Antonio Lombardo (most of them now in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg); in Goodgal's opinion, it and the adjoining "camerino," the site of the Bacchanal pictures and the *Aeneas* frieze, were in the ravelin of the castle. It should be noted, however, that the term *camerini* was also used for the suite of rooms in the Via Coperta proper (see discussion in text).
4. A summary of the documents is in Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 146, 182, 198, 201, with references. The vast literature on the commissioning of the Bacchanals includes: Hope 1971; Goodgal 1978; Cavalli-Björkman 1987; Shearman 1987; Shearman 1992, pp. 250–58.
5. As is pointed out in Shearman 1987, p. 215, in September 1519 Mario Equicola sent Alfonso a portrait of a chameleon, and, soon afterward, the animal itself, on short-term loan. It is mentioned in the Aldobrandini inventory of 1603 (see n. 1) that a representation of this exotic creature was included in Dosso's *Bacchanal*.
6. Vasari 1568 (1987 ed., vol. 1, p. 447, for the translation). In the original: "Avendo, l'anno 1514, il duca Alfonso di Ferrara fatto acconciare un camerino, et in certi spartimenti fatto fare dal Dosso, pittore ferrarese, istorie di Enea, di Marte e Venere, et in una grotta Vulcano con due fabbri alla fucina." Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 6, p. 158). Vasari's mention of Vulcan has frequently caused critics to confuse this lost compartment of the *Aeneas* frieze with Dosso's contribution to the series of Bacchanals. As suggested in Hope 1971, p. 644, followed by Del Bravo 1994, p. 81, n. 25, the picture for the frieze probably represented Vulcan forging Aeneas's weapons at the request of Venus (*Aeneid* VIII:370ff.); the mention of Mars is probably a mistake.
7. They were dispatched from Ferrara on April 1, 1608 (Mezzetti 1965b, pp. 81–83); they arrived in Rome on May 17 (Marcon, Maddalo, and Marcolini in Ferrara 1983, no. 44).
8. "Et questi sono dieci pezzi che servono per fregio ad un Camerino; sono lunghi ogni pezzo una Canna et alto tre palmi rappresentano diverse azioni d'Enea, scritte da Virgilio sono bellissimi" (Mezzetti 1965b, p. 82). One *canna architettonica romana*, comprising ten *palmi architettonici romani*, was equivalent to about 88 inches.
9. Della Pergola 1955, pp. 30, 152.
10. Della Pergola 1964–65, nos. 112, 175, 192, 203, 222, 357, 368, 390, 443.
11. "Un quadro bislongo di 7 palmi in tela con diverse figure e capri morti attaccati ad un arbore del N° 2 con cornice dorata del Dosi di ferrara." Ibid., p. 225, no. 112.
12. "Un quadro longo con Campagne con diverse figure

- nude e vestite del N. 2 in tela con cornice dorata del Dosi di ferrara." Ibid., p. 460, no. 357.
13. Published in Rinaldis 1937.
14. Hope 1971; Hope 1987.
15. "Quadri per le stantie de lo Ill.^{mo} s.n. a la via coperta." See also Mezzetti 1965b, pp. 77–78.
16. Goodgal 1978, p. 165.
17. "A lo Off^o de la munizione lire 27, soldi 5 de moneta e per lui a m^o dosso depintore quietanza per sua mercede de havere depinto piedi 109 de cornixotti a soldi 5 al pé ... quali cornixotti sono posti in lo Camarino de sua Ex^{ta} in Castello" (From the supplies office, a payment of 27 lire, 5 soldi in cash to Master Dosso, painter, for having painted 109 feet of molding at 5 soldi a foot ... these moldings are for His Excellency's Camerino in the castle). Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, pp. 212–13; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 164.
18. For a differing evaluation of the arguments about the Camerino's location, see Andrea Bayer's essay on the Este court, pp. 32–33 and n. 24.
19. Fehl 1975, p. 40.
20. Shearman 1992, pp. 256–57.
21. English quotations from the *Aeneid* are here taken from Virgil 1956.
22. See Mezzetti 1965b, p. 72.
23. Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 2, pls. 588, 592.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

24a. *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields*

The condition is good. There are some paint losses, especially on the left side and around the perimeter. The painting was retouched in 1963. The thread count is 21 per centimeter vertically and 19 per centimeter horizontally. There is no indication of a tacking edge all around, nor are there any imprints of the original strainer. The edges of the canvas are tattered on the left, top, and right, and there is very slight cusping all around. These might be indications that the picture has been reduced in size, as its counterpart, *The Sicilian Games*, was.

The green trees in the center are first laid out with lead white, clearly visible in the x-radiograph. The yellow trees are thinly painted on top of the lead white as an afterthought. The x-radiograph shows a few pentimenti. There is a dense diagonal area in the lower right-hand corner, as well as a horizontal line under the small hill in the

back right. It seems that the large reclining male figure in the foreground was added as an afterthought, partially covering the little reclining nude behind it. Part of the group of small figures in the right background was covered up.

24b. *The Sicilian Games*

The condition is fair; unfortunately, the painting has been through a fire. Some areas, such as the background trees and the figures floating in the sky, are so abraded that they appear ghostly. The painting was wax lined and restored, with *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields*, in 1963. The thread count of the canvas is 21 per centimeter vertically and 19 per centimeter horizontally. The tacking edges of the canvas have been cut or torn off, and the actual painting is slightly smaller than the *Elysian Fields*. The x-radiograph reveals signs that at some time the painting was folded over a smaller strainer. More recently the painting was put on a larger stretcher to make it conform to the size of the other picture, and the edges were repainted. There are no clear imprints of the original strainer. A fire depicted at the left is cut off, indicating that the composition extended farther.

The shadows in the trees show the preparatory layer of dark blue, with the green or yellow glaze that would have covered it now gone. There are very clear fingerprints in the lower left corner, but because of damage it is difficult to identify other such areas. There may also be fingerprints and imprints from dabbing with a cloth on the red dress of the figure cleaning a fish. Many pentimenti are visible in the x-radiograph, including one along the arm and shoulder of the standing man in the group of three and another in the drape over the leg of the crouching figure on the right. The arms and legs of the standing figure in the center also have been changed. The small group of figures on the left shows an especially large number of revisions: the figure of the man carrying a bucket of water was originally partially covered by another figure, which is now behind him; a standing figure of a man facing us is beneath the bearded man with a turban; another figure seems to have been to the right of him. The dog and the deer in the foreground were added after the landscape was finished, and a few buildings were painted over with trees.

25. *Allegory of Music*

Ca. 1522

Oil on canvas, 63½ in. ×

66⅛ in. (162 × 170 cm)

Inscribed, on tablet
behind standing woman:
Trinitas in unum
Museo della Fondazione
Horne, Florence 80

Provenance

Cardinal Scipione
Borghese, Rome (ca. 1633
inv. no. 40); Villa
Borghese, Rome (by
1650); Giovanni Battista
Borghese, Rome (1693
inv. no. 418);⁶ Herbert
Horne, Florence (from
1913);⁷ Fondazione
Horne, Florence

References

Manilli 1650, p. 102;
A. Venturi 1891, p. 427;
Gamba 1920, p. 181;
A. Venturi 1928, p. 976;
Berenson 1932, p. 174;
Barbantini in Ferrara
1933, p. 163; A. Venturi
1933, p. 389; Longhi 1934
(1956 ed., p. 86); Parigi
1940; Antonelli Trenti
1964, p. 413; Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 26, 85;
Middeldorf 1965, p. 172;
Rossi 1966, p. 148;
Berenson 1968, p. 111;
Gibbons 1968, pp. 92–98,
138–39, 178–79;
Mirimonde 1968,
pp. 305–7; Calvesi 1969b,
pp. 171–72; Freedberg
1971 (1975 ed.,
pp. 318–20); Scherliess
1972, pp. 35, 71, 96–97;
Camiz in Ferrara 1983,
pp. 85–89; Trevisani in
Rovigo 1984, p. 155;

More than any of Dosso's other works on musical themes (see cat. nos. 28, 38), this allegory about the mythical origins and intellectual status of the art of music reflects the high sophistication of musical culture in Renaissance Ferrara. The dominant figure is the blacksmith in his billowing red cloak; inspired by the genius with a flaming torch, he is forging musical notes on his anvil (detail) by means of three numbered hammers. Lying on the ground below is a *lira da braccio*, or viol. The two women each hold a tablet inscribed with a musical canon in a triangular or circular configuration; above the triangular piece are the words "Trinitas in unum" (Trinity into one). The identities of the three main figures remain a matter of debate, particularly that of the smith, who according to one interpretation is Tubalcain of the Old Testament and according to another is Vulcan, the Roman god of fire.

The figure was understood as Vulcan in the first known reference to the picture, which appears in a recently discovered inventory of the Borghese collection in Rome that was made about 1633: "A picture of Vulcan striking, with two other figures and a putto. . . ." Jacomo Manilli's description of the Villa Borghese in 1650 expands on this identification: "The large picture above the organ, showing Vulcan and Venus at the forge, and signifying the invention of music . . . by the Dossi."¹² The picture was mentioned again in the inventory made for Giovanni Battista Borghese in 1693, although the figures were not explicitly identified, and the attribution had changed to Giorgione.³ Probably soon afterward the painting was sold, and nothing more was heard of it until its acqui-

sition on the Florentine art market in 1913 by Herbert Horne. Mezzetti (1965a, p. 85), followed by Gibbons (1968), ignored those seventeenth-century sources and identified the picture as the Dosso work with a figure of Vulcan listed in the inventory of Olimpia Aldobrandini Pamphilj of 1682.⁴ Then, on the basis of Gibbons's assertion, Cavalli-Björkman (1987) further hypothesized that the work had entered the Aldobrandini collection together with the four Bacchanals by Bellini and Titian from Duke Alfonso's Camerino, and should accordingly be identified as Dosso's lost contribution to the decoration of the room. But the Aldobrandini Dosso, which indeed came from the Camerino, was not the same picture, as is clear from other descriptions of it (see cat. no. 24, n. 1); moreover, the *Allegory of Music* is somewhat smaller than the surviving Bacchanals, and in scale of figures and character of the setting it would have been unacceptably different from them. The picture is nevertheless likely to have been an Este commission, as were the other works by Dosso that entered the Borghese collection in the seventeenth century, and it was probably painted for some other room in the Este castle. As was suggested by McTavish (in Kingston 1988–89), it is possible that the work formed part of a cycle with the *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* (see cat. no. 22, p. 143).

Modern interpretations of the *Allegory of Music* began with a detailed study by Parigi (1940), who, following Gamba (1920), identified the smith as Tubalcain, "artificer in brass and iron" (Genesis 4:21–22). During the Middle Ages, Tubalcain and his harpist half brother Jubal were regarded as cofounders of the art of music; Parigi pointed out that the hammers on the smith's seat and on the ground are inscribed VIII and XII, respectively, a reference to the orderly sequence of sounds made by hammers of differing sizes. The link between the two activities of the Old Testament half brothers is provided by Greek tradition, since Pythagoras supposedly came to understand the foundations of musical theory by listening to the sounds made by blacksmiths at work. In Parigi's explanation, the two women symbolize the beauty of music; the canons inscribed on the tablets are Franco-Flemish in style and exhibit the sophisticated virtuosity that characterized vocal music at



25, detail showing notes struck on anvil



25

the Ferrarese court. Parigi read a dual message in the picture: first, while music is illuminated by inspiration (symbolized by the putto with the torch), it is necessarily also founded on the laws of nature (symbolized by the numbered hammers); and second, that vocal polyphony (represented by the canons) is more complex and beautiful than instrumental music (represented by the viol on the ground).

Building on Parigi's interpretation, Gibbons (1968) identified the two women as Tubalcain's mother, Zillah, and his sister, Naamah. Gibbons too emphasized the parallels between Hebraic and classical tradition, describing Tubalcain as "a kind of Old Testament Vulcan"; in similar fashion he saw the women as embodiments of the two contrasting aspects of Venus, sacred and profane. In keeping with the Neoplatonic reading of Titian's

Humphrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, p. 123; Cavallini-Björkman 1987, p. 74; McTavish in Kingston 1988–89, p. 13; Slim 1990; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 412; Sheard 1993, p. 328; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 46, 81, 327–28; Del

Bravo 1994, p. 79; Haar 1995, pp. 267–69; Romani 1996, p. 100; Bayer 1998; Smyth 1998

Sacred and Profane Love (Galleria Borghese, Rome) given by Panofsky, who retitled that painting *The Twin Venuses*,⁵ Gibbons described Dosso's half-clothed female figure and her canon as a symbol of profane music, and her nude companion as a symbol of the sacred. An identical interpretation of the women was contemporaneously and independently proposed by Mirimonde (1968).

The two musical canons were first successfully deciphered by Slim (1990). He showed that the relatively simple circular piece is close in style to that of the Flemish composer Adrian Willaert, who held a court appointment in Ferrara beginning about 1515. The triangular piece is taken from the *Agnus Dei* of Josquin Desprez's *Missa l'Homme armé super voces musicales*, which was printed in Venice in 1502; Josquin himself was in Ferrara in 1503–4, and his music was widely circulated there in manuscript form. Slim agreed with Parigi in identifying the male figure as Tubalcain and in seeing the canons as embodiments of musical perfection, and pointed out that the inscription "Trinitas in unum" draws attention to the symbolic equivalence of the circular and triangular configurations. But he argued that the contrast between the canons and the viol signifies the superiority not so much of vocal over instrumental as of notated over improvised music. Recalling Leonardo's criticism of music for its evanescence and consequent claim that painting more deserves the status of a Liberal Art, Slim interpreted the emphasis on notation in Dosso's *Allegory* as a reassertion of the intellectual dignity of the art of music. That conclusion tends to support the previously mentioned suggestion by McTavish that the picture, together with the *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity*, was painted as part of a cycle representing the Seven Liberal Arts.

Camiz (in Ferrara 1983) rejected the notion that the principal figure is Tubalcain and instead identified him as Vulcan (as had already been done by Manilli in 1650). Assuming that the picture was commissioned by Duke Alfonso, Camiz emphasized the duke's close personal interest in the classical god of fire: like Vulcan, Alfonso was skilled in the casting of metal. Flattering comparisons between the two were frequently made in art and literature of the day, including Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (III:51). Alfonso was also an accomplished musician, and, although traditionally Vulcan did not possess the musical associations of his Old Testament counterpart, Dosso ingeniously created

them here by alluding to the different notes sounded by hammer blows and thus invoking the story of Pythagoras. Haar (1995) agreed with Camiz that Dosso's representation appears much more classical than biblical in character and also that the two women are likely to stand for the sacred and the profane. Overall, he interpreted the allegory less as a study of dialectical contrast than as an allusion to the upward ascent of music: from its primitive beginnings in the form of simple notes, to the creation of musical instruments, and finally to the perfection of music in the form of sacred and secular canons.

Slim's and Haar's interpretations of the allegory differ more in emphasis than in substance, and both are consistent with the simple explanation ("the invention of music") that Manilli had provided in 1650. And on balance, Manilli's identification of the protagonist as Vulcan is probably more convincing than the biblical alternative. In fact, however, as Dosso's decoration of the Stua Grande in the castle of Buonconsiglio at Trent clearly illustrates, this painter was quite willing to combine Judaeo-Christian and classical cultural traditions, perhaps with the purpose of suggesting a universal truth that transcends both. In any case, as so often is true with Dosso (see also cat. nos. 3, 12), the ambiguity that clings to the central figure seems deliberate.

With its composition dominated by three large-scale, thickset nudes and its lack of a landscape setting, the *Allegory* is particularly close in style to the Borghese *Saints Cosmas and Damian* (cat. no. 23) and the *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* (cat. no. 22). Gibbons (1968) dated this group to the end of Dosso's career, aligning it with the *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42) and other pictures of the later 1530s. But much more convincing is the view of Antonelli Trenti (1964), followed by Mezzetti (1965a) and Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), all of whom related the style of the *Allegory* to the blend of Venetianism and Michelangelism evident in the probably slightly earlier Modena altarpiece of 1518–21 (fig. 1). Thus, while the ample proportions and complex poses of the three nudes are clearly meant to evoke both the *Ignudi* of the Sistine ceiling and classical sculpture, and the spaceless composition is self-consciously relieflike, the handling, as in the Modena altarpiece, remains raw and pictorial, and the plump and fleshy females betray an as yet unidealized naturalism. Significant in this context

is Bayer's (1998) observation that the woman seen from behind loosely derives from Jacopo de' Barbari's *Victory and Fame* engraving of about 1500, which was in turn inspired by Dürer's *Four Naked Women*. Such an affinity is in striking contrast to the polished, post-classical refinement that Dosso's style was already beginning to demonstrate by the time of the *Apollo* (cat. no. 28), datable to the mid-1520s; accordingly, Antonelli Trenti's date of about 1522 seems exactly right.

Recent x-radiographs have revealed characteristically extensive pentimenti (fig. 75). The most radical change is particularly evident at the left: Dosso reversed the relative positions of the seated blacksmith and the standing female figure.

PH

1. No. 40: "Un quadro di Vulcano quando batte con doi altre figure, et un putto cornice negra tocca d'oro, alto 6½ largo 6¾, Dossi." This inventory, recently discovered by Monsignor Sandro Corradini, has just been published by him in Rome 1998. It was first referred to by Anna Coliva in a lecture given on May 10, 1996. I am grateful to Msgr. Corradini and to Kristina Herrmann Fiore for generously making it possible for me to quote references from the inventory.
2. "Il grande [quadro] sopra il Claviorgano, di Vulcano, e Venere nella fucina, figurato per l'invenzione della Musica . . . de i Dossi." Manilli 1650, p. 102.
3. "Un quadro grande in tela con due Donne nude una in piedi e l'altra a sedere con una Carta di Musica in mano con il violino sotto ai piedi con un homo nudo a sedere con il martello in mano che vuol battere sopra l'Ancudine et un altro martello ai piedi con un ragazzo che tiene la torcia accesa in mano del N° 418. Cornice dorata del Giorgioni" (A large picture on canvas with two nude women, one standing, the other sitting with a sheet of music in her hand and a violin at her feet. A seated nude man holds a hammer in his hand and is about to strike the anvil; another hammer lies at his feet. A boy holds a lighted torch in his hand. From no. 418, with a gilt frame. By Giorgione). See Della Pergola 1964–65, p. 459, no. 338.
4. See Della Pergola 1962–63, p. 73.
5. Panofsky 1969, pp. 110–19.
6. See above, nn. 1, 2.
7. Rossi 1966, p. 148.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting was restored and relined in 1993 (no drawing was found on the back). Although otherwise in good condition, it has numerous damages and tears. The arm of the putto at the left has been



Fig. 75. X-radiograph of *Allegory of Music* showing standing female figure at the left and seated male figure at the center

repaired with new canvas; there are two tears through the figure of Vulcan (or Tubalcain) and another on the shoulder of the central figure. The tablet with the circular canon is abraded, and the paint surface in general has been abraded by solvents (perhaps exacerbated by Dosso's use of the softer walnut oil as a medium). The large number of concentric cracks indicates that the ground and preparation are very hard. The thread count of the canvas is 14 per centimeter vertically and 12 per centimeter horizontally. Two pieces, one 95 centimeters wide, the other 74.5 centimeters wide, are sewn together vertically. The painting is cut at top and bottom by more than 6 centimeters and at the right by approximately 5 centimeters: the imprint of the strainer bar, measuring 6 centimeters, is visible only at the left; the center vertical stretcher reinforcement is off center; and the inscription, "Trinitas in unum," is cropped at the right. Old nail holes near the left edge and a vertical crease in the paint layer 2 centimeters from the edge indicate that the painting was previously mounted on a smaller strainer. There are imprints of the diagonal reinforcements of the original strainer in the corners.

A black or dark gray preparation underlies the whole painting. A red substrate was found under the dark blue sky, which was painted last, the blue

covering the edges of the torch and the figures. The pigments used in Vulcan's billowing red drape are of particular interest. A thick substrate of red pigment (probably vermillion, as with the Getty *Allegory of Fortune*, cat no. 41) is covered by a layer of red lake, which seems to have been dabbed by hand or, more likely, with a cloth, creating an undulating texture. The green garment of the central female figure is painted in two layers over a yellow substrate, which is quite dense in the x-radiograph and very likely is of lead-tin yellow. The first layer painted over it is green, probably verdigris, and has visible hand or finger marks, while the second brown layer, much worn, is probably discolored copper resinate.

Both Vulcan and the two women have distinct strands of hair carefully painted over areas of bare skin. Because of abrasion, eyebrows, eyelashes, and Vulcan's beard are barely visible, although they can be seen in infrared reflectography. A lead

white image in the x-radiograph (fig. 75) shows that a beautifully sketched first draft of the central woman originally appeared much farther to the left, in the area now occupied by Vulcan, while the faint image of a billowing cape in the center indicates that the male figure was initially placed there. A distinct pentimento in the musical canon at the right, probably painted in lead white and not visible in infrared, indicates that the canon was at first planned as a rectangle, not a circle. Various objects laid out on the ground were then painted out; the most intriguing of these is one that looks like a large letter D just above the foot of the woman on the right. On the anvil one can see a pentimento of different notes beneath those painted. Still other notes, flying from the anvil as it is struck, are visible only under close examination.

(Some information from 1993 restoration records of Studio 4, Piazzale Donatello, in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.)

Seven Allegorical Rhomboids

26a. *Anger*, also called *The Quarrel* 26b. *Conversation*

26c. *Drunkenness* 26d. *Love*, also called *The Embrace*

26e. *Seduction* 26f. *Music* 26g. *Violence*

26a. *Anger*
Ca. 1515–16
Oil on panel, 42 1/8 x
37 3/8 in. (107 x 95 cm);
each side, 28 in. (71 cm)
Fondazione Giorgio
Cini, Venice

26b. *Conversation*
Ca. 1521–22 (?)
Oil on panel, 41 1/2 x
37 3/8 in. (105.5 x 95 cm);
each side, 28 in. (71 cm)
Galleria Estense,
Modena 173

26c. *Drunkenness*
Ca. 1521–22 (?)
Oil on panel, 41 1/2 x
37 3/4 in. (105.3 x 96 cm);
each side, 28 in. (71 cm)
Galleria Estense,
Modena 176

These seven rhomboidal panels, it is presumed, once belonged to a group of nine—originally oval in shape—that were set into the gilt wooden ceiling of the first ducal apartment in the Via Coperta, probably in Duke Alfonso's bedroom. This is certainly true of the five from Modena, each of which portrays three interacting figures; more controversial is the question whether the panels in Venice (Palazzo Cini) and Eger, which have four and two figures respectively, also belonged to the ceiling. Related to this issue is the equally controversial one of their dating, since, surprisingly for a small group of middle-sized panels, they show considerable diversity in style. Furthermore, what the various scenes represent is far from clear. Presumably the pictures are allegories, referring in some way to indulgence of the senses (food, wine, music, love) or of instincts (anger, lust); but the titles are not known, and those given here are conventional ones retained princi-

pally for convenience of identification. These uncertainties do not detract from the compelling immediacy of the panels, with their genrelike figures in contemporaneous dress; the physiognomies exhibit expressive contrast and at the same time powerful naturalism. Particularly striking are the conspicuous still-life details, especially in the head-dresses and the sensuously painted fruits arranged along the foreground parapets (see detail, p. 166).

The best documentation of the ceiling decoration is from the period when Ferrara devolved to the papacy. It was agreed then that the furnishings of the Via Coperta belonged to Cesare d'Este, the new duke of Modena, and among the items listed in an inventory drawn up on April 17, 1598, were a frieze comprising sixteen landscapes and a "gilt wooden ceiling with carved foliage and 9 paintings."¹ The inventory describes the paintings as *mandorle*, meaning almond-shaped or oval. The ceiling and the frieze below it remained in place



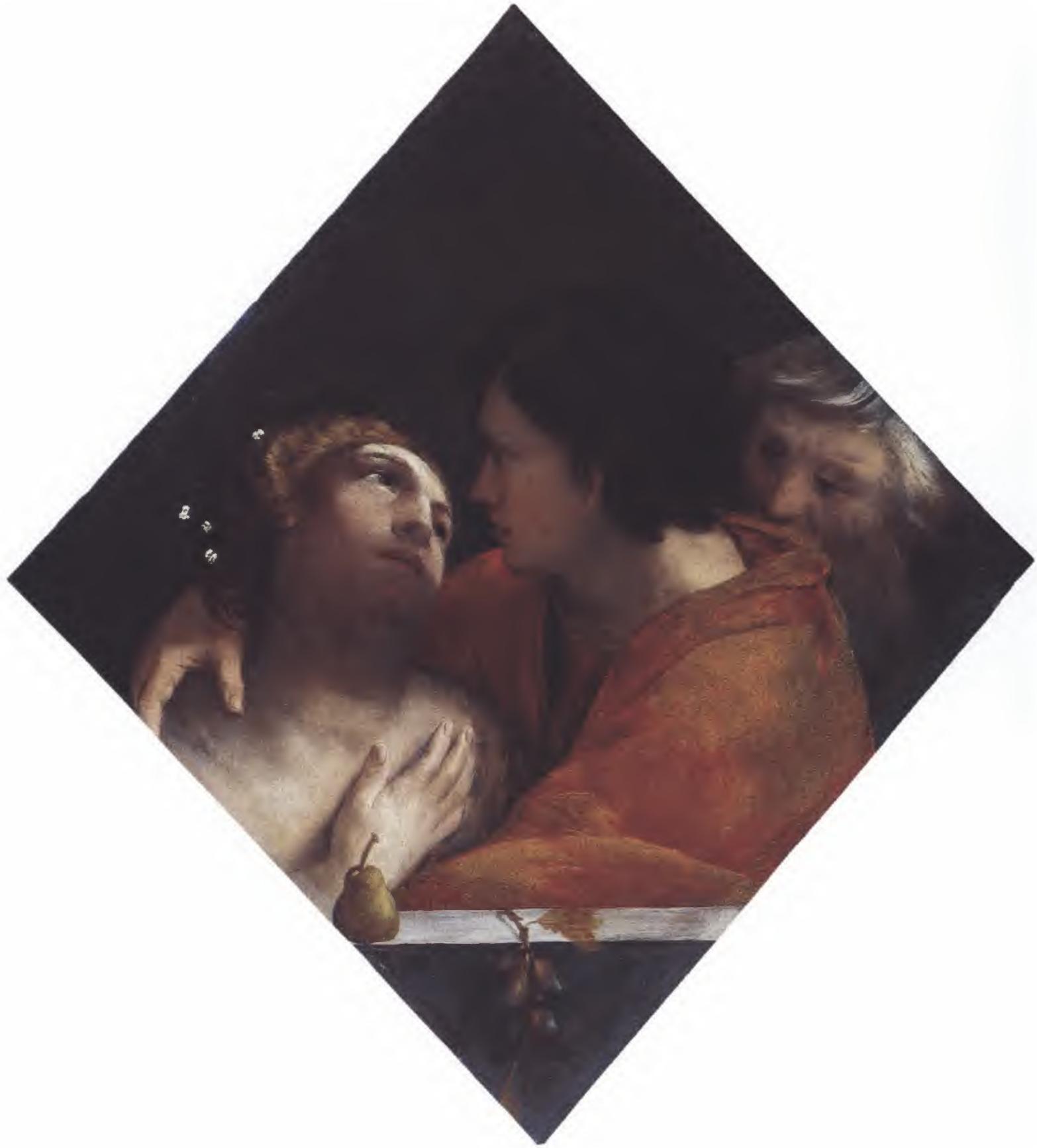
26a. *Anger*, also called *The Quarrel*



26b. *Conversation*



26c. *Drunkenness*



26d. *Love*, also called *The Embrace*



26e. *Seduction*



26f. *Music*



26g. *Violence*



26d (*Love*), detail

26d. *Love*

Ca. 1525–28

Oil on panel, $42\frac{3}{8} \times 37\frac{3}{4}$ in. (107.6×96 cm); each side, 28 in. (71 cm)

Galleria Estense,
Modena 175

26e. *Seduction*

Ca. 1525–28

Oil on panel, $41\frac{1}{8} \times 37\frac{3}{4}$ in. (106.3×96 cm); each side, 28 in. (71 cm)

Galleria Estense,
Modena 174

26f. *Music*

Ca. 1530

Oil on panel, $41\frac{3}{4} \times 37\frac{1}{4}$ in. (106.2×94.7 cm); each side, 28 in. (71 cm)

Galleria Estense,
Modena 172

for another ten years, but in 1608, the ceiling panels, together with the large roundel from the nearby Camera del Poggiolo (cat. no. 32), were sent by mistake to Cardinal Scipione Borghese in Rome, who at that time was buying other pictures by Dosso from the castle complex, including the Aeneas frieze from the Camerino (cat. no. 24). (In a letter of March 12 of that year, Cardinal Borghese's agent in Ferrara, Ezio Bentivoglio, described the nine ovals and the roundel as containing a total of thirty-two figures in half-length.² Since the roundel had five figures, the nine ovals must have averaged three figures each, but it is still quite possible that one of them had only two and another four.) Borghese took advantage of the mistaken shipment by keeping the roundel and four of the *mandorle*; only five were returned to their rightful owner, the duke of Modena.³ Those five, which retained their oval forms until at least the mid-eighteenth century, were thereafter regularly mentioned in the Modenese ducal inventories.⁴

The four panels that remained in Rome are listed in a recently discovered Villa Borghese inventory of about 1633, by which date they had evidently already been converted to rhomboids.

From the descriptions, two are clearly identifiable with the Eger and Palazzo Cini pictures, while the other pair is described as follows: "Two pictures on panel with three half-length figures in each, two of which wear a garland and one [with] finger at the mouth, the other one garlanded and a woman with a garland in her hand."⁵ This pair was later recorded by Manilli (1650) and Montelatici (1700),⁶ but soon afterwards it disappeared. As Fredericksen (1998) pointed out, the other two passed from the Borghese collection to that of Marchese Matteo Sacchetti, in whose 1726 inventory an item clearly identifiable as the Palazzo Cini picture is described as "four quarrelling women."⁷ In 1748 it is listed among items recently acquired for the Capitoline Museum,⁸ together with one equally clearly identifiable as the Eger panel: "Another picture three *palmi* wide by three, representing two figures in half-length, a man and a woman, embracing."⁹ But the pair did not remain in the museum, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century the Palazzo Cini picture, and perhaps also the one in Eger, belonged to the Roman painter and dealer Vincenzo Camuccini. The former work was acquired in 1853 from Camuccini's brother by the duke of Northumberland, who installed it in Alnwick Castle, where it remained until it was sold on the London art market in 1953 and returned to Italy.¹⁰

This documentation, drawn from the history of collecting in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rome, certainly lends weight to the assumption that the Palazzo Cini and Eger pictures, with their similar format and composition and use of a foreground parapet, come from the same ceiling as the Modena set. (That conclusion has sometimes been doubted because neither the Cini nor the Eger panel contains three figures, as others in the group do.) Much less clear, however, is the evidence regarding dates provided by records of various payments made to Dosso by the ducal exchequer for work on ceiling decoration between the years 1521 and 1529, since it is by no means always evident to which room the records refer. Mendelsohn (1914), followed by Mezzetti (1965a, p. 61), thought that a series of payments in 1524–26 for the roundel in the Camera del Poggiolo were also for work on the ceiling of the duke's bedroom; in this case, however, the wording of the documents is quite specific and clearly refers to the roundel alone.¹¹ Hope (1971) linked the rhomboids with payments of September and

December 1529;¹² but, as was pointed out by Mezzetti (1975), these mention canvases, not panels, and the phrase “le Camare del Signore in la via coperta” probably refers to the ducal apartments in general rather than to Alfonso’s bedroom in particular. Much more convincing is the suggestion made by Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) that a series of payments dated January 11, 1521, June 26–August 9, 1521, and October 11, 1522, were for the *mandorle*—especially since the first and last documents also mention the duke’s bedroom.¹³ Yet it is worth noting that the 1521 payments amount to the trifling sums of 18, 21, and 36 lire, respectively; while the 1522 payment of 158 lire is also curiously low, considering that in addition it covered Dosso’s contribution to the decoration of the palace chapel and the execution of the frieze of sixteen landscapes on the upper walls of the bedroom. In other words, the documents leave open the possibility that Dosso had begun work on the ceiling before 1521 and continued to provide panels after 1522.

There is an obvious logic in the assumption made by Mezzetti and Ballarin and also by Bacchi (in Venice 1990) that all nine panels were painted within the brief period of a year or two. They are not large, and it is easy to imagine that once having commissioned them, the duke wanted to see them quickly in place. Yet Gibbons (1968) was certainly correct to see a stylistic distinction not only between the Modena group and the separated pair but also within the group. Thus, while he dated all five of the Modena panels implausibly late, to the 1530s (and hence was forced to deny that they came from the duke’s bedroom), his suggestion that their execution was protracted over the better part of a decade is confirmed by the visual evidence. Ballarin’s dating to 1521–22 on the basis of the documents certainly works for *Conversation* and *Drunkenness*, both of which are stylistically very close to the *Saints Cosmas and Damian* of about 1520–22 (cat. no. 23), and even to pictures of the late teens such as the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael* of about 1517–18 (fig. 6). But the female type in *Music*, with her elaborate hairstyle *all’antica*, is much closer to the Virgin in the *Holy Family* of about 1527–29 (cat. no. 37); and consistent with this, the hard concentric folds of her red sleeve clearly show Dosso’s knowledge of Parmigianino’s activity in Bologna between 1527 and 1530. *Music* is also more dynamic in composition than the

more strictly symmetrical *Conversation* and *Drunkenness*, and the high collars of the male figures on the left belong to a later fashion than the low-necked white shirts of the earlier pair. *Love* and *Seduction* are more difficult to date precisely, but the two appear slightly more advanced than *Conversation* and *Drunkenness*, and may be close to the roundel of 1524–26, which survives in fragments (cat. no. 32). Apparently close to this later pair is the Eger panel, *Violence*; and, significantly, the somewhat schematically rendered, upturned face of the woman resembles the one in the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece of about 1526–27 (fig. 8). The way two large-boned, sculpturally conceived figures are compressed into a shallow plane is also very similar to the style of the Della Sale altarpiece, completed in 1527 (fig. 76). The Palazzo Cini panel, *Anger*, on the other hand, appears to date from a considerably earlier period, close to the *Melissa* of about 1515–16 (cat. no. 12). The facial features of the quarreling couple, rather fine and sharp, are akin to those the enchantress; the rich sheen on the man’s red sleeve resembles that of the enchantress’s dress; and the man’s floral headdress is like that of one of the angels in the Borghese *Nativity* of about 1517 (cat. no. 17). It should also be observed that the man’s long hair and the low neckline of his shirt conform to the fashion of the second decade rather than the third. Yet all this is not to deny that the Cini panel was painted for Duke Alfonso’s bedroom ceiling; it is merely to conclude that for some reason the decoration proceeded at a very slow pace indeed, over a long period of about fifteen years.

Bacchi (in Venice 1990) has suggested that the decoration followed a program devised by the court humanist Celio Calcagnini that was perhaps designed to evoke some decorative cycle known to have existed in classical antiquity. While this possibility cannot be ruled out, it is difficult to prove; in any case, the apparently slow, piecemeal execution of the ceiling implies that whatever literary program might have been employed was loose and flexible. Bacchi may well have been right, however, to suggest that the nineteenth-century inscriptions on *Conversation* (“Modica mensa iuvat,” A modest meal delights) and *Music* (“Musica corda levat,” Music uplifts the heart), removed as extraneous in 1939, nevertheless repeated originals. It is possible that all the panels once carried similar Latin tags explicating their meaning. However, the title *Riso, Piano, Paura, Ira*

26g. *Violence*
Ca. 1526–28
Oil on panel, 28 1/8 × 26 7/8 in. (71.3 × 67 cm)
Dobó István
Vármúzeum, Eger
(Hungary) 55. 291

Provenance
26a: Duke Alfonso I,
Ferrara; Cardinal Scipione
Borghese, Rome (from
1608; 1633 inv., no. 75);
Villa Borghese, Rome
(until after 1700);
Marchese Matteo
Sacchetti, Rome (1726
inv.); Museo Capitolino,
Rome (1748 inv., no. 20);
Vincenzo Camuccini,
Rome (1771–1844);
Giovanni Battista
Camuccini, Rome;
(1844–53); Algernon
Percy, 4th duke of
Northumberland,
Alnwick Castle (1853–65);
by descent, dukes of
Northumberland, Alnwick
Castle (1865–1953); sale,
Sotheby’s, London
(November 4, 1953, no.
90); Carlo and Marcello
Sestieri, Rome; Count
Vittorio Cini, Venice
(1954)

26b–f: Duke Alfonso I,
Ferrara; Cesare d’Este,
duke of Modena,
Modena; by descent,
dukes of Modena, Galleria
Ducale, Modena (from
1608); Accademia di Belle
Arti, Modena (by 1797);
Galleria Estense, Modena
(from 1854)

26g: Duke Alfonso I,
Ferrara; Cardinal Scipione
Borghese, Rome (from
1608; 1833 inv., no. 39);

Villa Borghese, Rome
(until after 1700);
Marchese Matteo
Sacchetti, Rome (1726 inv.);
Museo Capitolino, Rome
(1748 inv. no. 21); Pánthy
Endre, bishop of Eger, in
Vienna (1873, as by
Giorgione); his bequest to
the Dobó István
Vármúzeum, Eger (1906)¹⁵

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p. 217; L. Venturi 1913,
p. 194; Mendelsohn 1914,
pp. 35, 91–92; A. Venturi
1928, pp. 946–47, 975;
Pallucchini 1945, p. 88;
Bargellesi 1955, pp. 95–98;
Longhi 1963, p. 59; Puppi
1964, p. 31; Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 26–28, 99–100,
122; Mezzetti 1965b,
pp. 73–75, 81–83; Puppi
1965; Berenson 1968,
p. 114; Gibbons 1968,
pp. 121, 210–11; Calvesi
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p. 644; Mezzetti 1975,
pp. 14–17; Barolsky 1978,
p. 189; Bacchi in Venice
1990, pp. 74–81; Ballarin
1994–95, p. 334; Ferrara
1996, p. 230; Fredericksen
1998

26b-f: Gherardi 1744
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Campori 1855, p. 192;
A. Venturi 1882,
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p. 285; Berenson 1907,
p. 210; Gardner 1911,
p. 162; Zwanziger 1911,
pp. 68–69; L. Venturi
1913, p. 194; Mendelsohn
1914, pp. 35, 85–91;
A. Venturi 1928, pp.
945–46, 977; Berenson
1932, p. 175; Pallucchini
1945, pp. 88–89; Bargellesi
1955, p. 95; Longhi 1963,

(Laughter, Sorrow, Fear, Anger) given the Cini picture, a quotation from Petrarch's Sonnet XXXII, was certainly not original; it was probably applied to the painting by Camuccini in the earlier nineteenth century and then codified by Waagen (1854). But, although there is no historical connection with Petrarch, the figures may indeed be intended to personify contrasting emotions or humors (Gibbons 1968; Barolsky 1978). As Gibbons also pointed out, it is possible that the bread, spilled wine, and white tablecloth in the foreground were intended to carry a eucharistic significance and allude to the wicked impiety of resorting to violence and despair.

Whatever their precise significance, the panels clearly represent, as Burckhardt (1855) recognized, a development out of the genrelike, often sharply expressive pictures of Giorgione, such as the so-called *Three Ages of Man* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence), *Giovanni Borgherini and His Tutor* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), or the *Vecchia* (fig. 61). Yet when compared with such works and also with Dosso's own earlier, more explicitly Giorgionesque pictures, this series offers a portrayal of the passions that is much more overt. The subject of the Eger panel, for example—the sexual pursuit of a half-naked female by a bestial male dressed in the hide of an animal—resumes the theme of the early *Nymph and Satyr* of about 1508–9 (cat. no. 1); but the encounter as now depicted is both more sensual, with the satyr's arm pressing down on his victim's breasts, and more brutal. Some of the other panels develop instead the effect of comedy bordering on caricature that was already present in the early *Buffoon* of about 1510 (cat. no. 2) and that would be taken even further in the late work *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42). Hochmann (1998) has even suggested that the entire ceiling decoration was devised as an amusing counterpart to—almost a parody of—the heroically conceived mythological paintings in the duke's nearby Camerino.

The various mutilations undergone by all seven panels are readily apparent. The Modena group and the Cini panel show additions at all four of their corners; and, after being transformed from an oval into a rhomboid in the early seventeenth century, the Cini painting was made into a circular tondo, probably in the nineteenth century, before being restored to rhomboidal form in 1954. Conceivably the vertical left-hand plank of this panel, which contains the grinning man and the

right arm of the despairing figure in the foreground, is a replacement, dating from perhaps the early seventeenth century. The surfaces of the Modena panels are particularly badly abraded; the ghost of a second female figure in *Drunkenness* is now barely discernible.¹⁴ Whatever is crude or perfunctory in the appearance of the group may accordingly be ascribed to the vicissitudes of their history; there is no good reason to believe, as Gibbons and Ballarin did, that Battista played a significant role in the pictures' execution.

PH

1. "Solaro d'intaglio di foia rillevata addorato con 9 quadri de pittura." See Mezzetti 1965a, p. 137.
2. For the passage in Bentivoglio's letter, see the essay by Anna Coliva, n. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 135; Mezzetti 1965b, pp. 74–75, 81–82, nos. V, VI; Goodgal 1978, pp. 171–72.
4. It is not clear whether by 1663 they had been incorporated into a larger ceiling decoration that already existed in the private apartments of the duke of Modena, since, although the individual fields were described as ovals "mainly" by Dosso, there were apparently ten of them, and they were also described as being on canvas: "Nel suffitto della stanza numero dieci di pezzi di quadri in tella fatti a mandola con teste diverse, la maggior parte de Dosi" (Bentini and Curti 1993, p. 60). Less ambiguous is an inventory of before 1720 that mentions a sixth oval added to the original five (A. Venturi 1882, p. 313); and the individual pieces are described in detail in the inventory of 1744 made by Pietro Ercole Gherardi (1986 ed., pp. 36, 42, 55).
5. No. 61: "Doi quadri in tavola di tre mezze figure per ciascheduno doi de quali ingrillandate, et uno [?] dito alla bocca, l'altro uno ingrillandate, una [?] con la grillan in mano cornice bisquadrata dorata, alto 4 largo 3½, Dossi." The Eger picture, no. 39 in the inventory, is described as follows: "Un quadro in tavola un huomo, che abbraccia una donna mezza figura cornice dorata forma bisquadra, alto 3, Dossi" (A picture on panel, a man embracing a woman shown in half length. Gilt frame, double square shape, 3 [palms] high, by Dosso.) The Cini picture, no. 75, is described as follows: "Un quadro in tavola doi donne, che si sgraffiano, et doi altre teste cornice bisquadrata dorata alta quattro larga 3¾, Dossi." (A picture on panel, with two women scratching at each other and two other heads. Gilt double square frame, 4 [palms] high by 3¾ wide, by Dosso.) (The term "bisquadrato," usually signifying a double square, is probably used here to denote a rhomboid.) These extracts from the Villa Borghese inventory of about 1633, first cited by Anna Coliva (see p. 79, n. 4), are quoted with the permission of Msgr. Sandro Corradini and Kristina Herrmann Fiore; see cat. no. 25, n. 1. The inventory was recently published by Sandro Corradini in Rome 1998, pp. 449–56.
6. Manilli 1650, p. 102: "I due quadri à quattro facce, con tre mezze figure per vno, sono de' Dossi ... Nell'altro muro, verso la Sala, due quadri à quattro facce, di mezze



Fig. 76. *Saints John the Evangelist and Bartholomew with Pontichino Della Salle and Another Man*. Oil on canvas. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini, Rome



Fig. 77. X-radiograph of *Drunkenness* (cat. no. 26c), showing traces of original oval shape at corners and grapevine above head of Bacchus

figure . . . de i Dossi.” Montelatici 1700, p. 302: “Li due quadri à quattro facce di mezze figure simili ad altre due, che qui si vedono, sono opere de Dossi.”

7. “Quattro . . . Donne, che contrastano.” G. De Marchi 1987, pp. 471, 480.

8. “Altro [quadro] alto palmi 3 largo palmi 3 rappresentante quattro mezze figure di Donne, che contrastano, del Dossi.” Guarino in Rome 1991–92, p. 47, no. 20.

9. “Altro [quadro] alto palmi 3 largo palmi 3 rappresentante due mezze figure, d'un huomo, e d'una donna, che s'abbracciano.” Ibid., p. 47, no. 21.

10. See Bacchi in Venice 1990.

11. See entry for cat. no. 32, n. 1. Admittedly, however, the record of payment for ultramarine pigment on September 26, 1524, mentions that it is “per dare dentro li quadri del suffito de la via coperta,” thus that the ultramarine was intended for more than one picture; whereas the ceiling of the Camera del Poggio was a single large panel. See Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 197.

12. “De pinzere tella de la coperta de le Camare del Signore in la via coperta.” Document in A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 55, no. CXL; see Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 243.

13. Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, pp. 212, 216, nos. 24, 29, 30, 39; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 163, 166, 178. The 1524 document speaks of “li quadri al solaro e suxo del Cam. de la Ill^{mo} s.n.”

14. It is clear from the description by Gherardi 1744 (1986 ed., p. 42) that the missing figure was female: “di qua e di là due teste femminili.”

15. Information on nineteenth-century provenance from Dr. Petercsák Tivadar, István Dobó Vármúzeum, Eger.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

Of the five rhomboids examined, all are in fair to good condition and were restored in 1997. The backgrounds have been repainted; traces of the original ultramarine were found in *Love*, cat. no. 26d. Extensive shrinkage crackles throughout point to a slow-drying medium like walnut oil. The panels were originally oval in shape, a fact mentioned in documents and confirmed by the x-radiograph. They were cut down and additions were made at all four corners of each, using pieces of the original panels. There is extensive use of lead white, which is mixed in with most of the colors (for this and other analyses of pigments and media, see the reports compiled in 1996 by G. F. Guidi and C. Seccaroni of ENEA and P. Moioli of INNTEC). Since lead white was identified in the backgrounds of all five paintings, it seems clear that Dosso used lead white in his preparation as well.

26b. *Conversation*. In the x-radiograph the rounded edge of the oval can be seen on the right. Interesting small changes may be noted: the woman on the left had a ribbon in her hair;

p. 59; Dreyer 1964–65,
p. 27, n. 84; Puppi 1964,
p. 31; Mezzetti 1965a,
pp. 26–28, 99–100;
Mezzetti 1965b,
pp. 73–75; Berenson
1968, p. 112; Gibbons
1968, pp. 114, 136,
243–44; Hope 1971,
p. 644; Mezzetti 1975,
pp. 14–17; Goodgal 1978,
p. 171; Marcon, Maddalo,
and Marcolini in Ferrara
1983, pp. 95–96; B. L.
Brown 1987, p. 46; Bacchi
in Venice 1990, pp. 74–79;
Ballarin in Paris 1993, p.
412; Ballarin 1994–95, pp.
50, 81–82, 330–32; Ferrara
1996, p. 231; Hochmann
1998

26g: Pallucchini 1945,
p. 88; Bargellesi 1955,
pp. 95–98; Czobor and
Bodnár 1960, no. 1; Puppi
1964, p. 31; Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 26–28, 81–82,
135; Mezzetti 1965b,

pp. 73–83; Berenson 1968, p. 111; Gibbons 1968, pp. 114, 136, 172–73; Hope 1971, p. 644; Mezzetti 1975, pp. 14–17; Bacchi in Venice 1990, pp. 74–79; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 412; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 46, 81, 324; Fredericksen 1998

her head was reduced in size; the nose and mouth of the central figure were placed farther down; the hair ornament of the central figure was modified.

26c. *Drunkenness*. Although the condition is good, the figure on the right is difficult to see. Strips cut from other parts of the panel were added to the lower right edge. The woman's blue shirt is painted with lead white and a pigment low in copper and high in iron, which could be ultramarine. The ribbon worn at the hairline shows various mixtures of lead-tin yellow and an earth color containing iron. The man's red shirt is vermillion and lead white with a red lake glaze. The x-radiograph (fig. 77) shows a number of changes, including a grapevine above Bacchus's head that is no longer visible.

26d. *Love*. The woman's shirt is painted not in azurite but, more likely, in ultramarine blue mixed with lead white. The pear on the parapet is a mixture of lead-tin yellow, copper green, and an earth color, and the transparent grape leaf (added as an afterthought) is presumably of a copper resinate that has oxidized. Orpiment was identified in the man's cloak. In the x-radiograph one can clearly

see the rounded edge on the left, indicating that the panel was originally oval. The only composition change observable is in the man's hand on the woman's shoulder.

26e. *Seduction*. The young man's shirt is painted with orpiment. The green leaves to the left are a mixture of copper green with lead-tin yellow, painted over a black preparation. In the x-radiograph the rounded edges are visible on both sides. Also revealed is a change in the flower at the left, possibly an iris, now difficult to identify because of its condition. The old man's face has been shifted and reduced in scale.

26f. *Music*. The overall preparation seems to be light brown. The greens are copper-based; they are painted over a lead-tin yellow substrate in the woman's scarf and are mixed with lead-tin yellow in the man's shirt. The red of the sleeve is painted over a lead white substrate. There seems to be a faint sign of underdrawing for the woman's face. The x-radiograph shows that the music book was originally smaller.

(See also the technical discussion by Jadranka Bentini, pp. 67–68.)

27. Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue

*Ca. 1523–24
Oil on canvas, 44 1/8 × 59 in. (112 × 150 cm)
Kunsthistorisches
Museum,
Gemäldegalerie, Vienna
9110*

Provenance
Probably Count Ludovico Widmann, Venice (1568–1638); Palazzo Widmann, San Canciano, Venice (1659 inv., until at least 1663); widow of Michelangelo Barbini,

In one of the most splendid works of his mid-career, Dosso depicts the ruler of the Olympian gods seated at an easel, holding palette, maulstick, and brushes, painting a picture of butterflies. His discarded thunderbolt lies at his feet. On the platform of clouds beside Jupiter sits Mercury, with winged feet and cap; turning to an approaching maiden, he places his finger on his lips, as if to signal that the painter is not to be disturbed at his work. Although a number of differing interpretations of the picture have been proposed, a central theme is certainly the art of painting itself, and in keeping with this subject is the exceptional sophistication of the paint handling and the unprecedented emphasis on evanescent pictorial effects. As if to complement Jupiter's evocation of the delicate, multicolored beauty of butterfly wings, Dosso introduces the transient phenomenon of a rainbow, models the figures' flesh with an unusually subtle sfumato, and bathes

the surfaces of the draperies in shimmering light.

It is probably fair to deduce from its imposing scale, complex mythological subject matter, and technical virtuosity that the picture was painted for Duke Alfonso. Unlike the majority of important works commissioned by the Estes, however, after 1598 it went not to Rome or Modena but, apparently, straight to the art market in Venice. It is first documented at the Palazzo Widmann in Venice in 1659 and presumably had previously belonged to the distinguished collector Count Lodovico Widmann (1568–1638).¹ Marco Boschini recorded in 1660 that a free variant of it by the Reggian painter Luca Ferrari (1605–1654) also existed in Venice.² Both Boschini and Giustiniano Martinioni,³ who noted the Dosso in Palazzo Widmann in 1663, correctly identified the unusual subject as deriving from a literary dialogue at that time attributed to the Greek satirist Lucian.



27

The picture was first discussed in relationship to the text in a fundamental article by Schlosser (1900). The dialogue, not an authentic work by Lucian, was in fact composed in the 1430s by Leon Battista Alberti;⁴ it takes place between Mercury, serving as an emissary from Jupiter, and Virtue, who has come to complain about her ill-treatment at the hands of gods and men, particularly the goddess Fortune. Half-naked and disheveled, Virtue is forced to stay a whole month outside Jupiter's palace while the gods come and go, warning her that she will have to wait until they have finished making cucumbers blossom and painting the wings of butterflies. Finally, Mercury explains to Virtue that Jupiter has no wish to quarrel with Fortune and sends her away disappointed. Clearly there are a number of discrepancies between the painting and the text, but Schlosser pointed out that Dosso was bound to elaborate imaginatively on his sources, just as

poets themselves did; and that the reference to painting butterfly wings clearly inspired the unusual portrayal of Jupiter. Schlosser also emphasized that Dosso's treatment of his figures, at once highly glamorous and faintly absurd, is close to the mock-heroic spirit of Ariosto.

Dissatisfied with Schlosser's rather generalized interpretation, Klauner (1964) provided a much more detailed analysis of several features of the painting that are not mentioned by or that depart from Alberti's text: Jupiter's activity as a painter, Virtue's elaborate dress and garlands of flowers, and the silence imposed on her by Mercury's gesture. Klauner saw the picture less as the free retelling of a story than as a moralizing allegory, with Jupiter standing for artistic creativity, Virtue for the moral power that enables human beings to triumph over adverse fortune, and Mercury for enlightened patronage of the arts. In this interpretation, Mercury's role is pivotal both in controlling

Venice (by 1857);⁸ Daniel Penther, Vienna (by 1887); sale, Miethke, Vienna (Jan. 22, 1888); Anton, Count Lanckoronski, Vienna (from 1888); bought from the Lanckoronski collection by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (1951)

References

- Sansovino 1663, p. 376; Mündler 1855–58 (1985 ed., pp. 154, 275); Schlosser 1900, pp. 262–70; Berenson 1907, p. 211; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 66–67; L. Venturi 1913, p. 195; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 34, 74–76; Schlosser 1918 (1927 ed.,

pp. 296–303); Gamba 1920, p. 181; A. Venturi 1928, pp. 961–64; Berenson 1932, p. 176; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 1960, pp. 44–45; Baldass 1961, pp. 82–83; Dreyer 1964–65, p. 368; Klauner 1964; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 25–26, 123–24; Puppi 1965; Whitfield 1966; Berenson 1968, p. 114; Gibbons 1968, pp. 132, 212–14; Calvesi 1969a, pp. 93–94; Emmens 1969; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., pp. 318–20); Barolsky 1978, p. 189; Biedermann 1982, pp. 136–37, n. 33; Chastel 1984, p. 151; Hüttinger 1985, pp. 32–33; Magani 1989, pp. 43–44; Biasini 1992; Calvesi 1993, pp. 68, 82, 179–95; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 417; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 93–94, 339–40; Del Bravo 1994, p. 78; Barolsky 1995, pp. 20–21; Romani 1996, p. 102; Bayer 1998; Ciammitti 1998; D'Ascia 1998

and regulating the source of artistic inspiration and in protecting the painter from any possible disturbance. Klauner further proposed to read the picture in astrological terms, with Jupiter and Mercury standing for their respective planets and Virtue for the sign of Virgo; and the author concluded by suggesting that Dosso's depiction of Jupiter was a self-portrait and that the artist had chosen the subject to illustrate his own horoscope. According to her calculations, Jupiter and Mercury were in conjunction in the sign of Virgo on July 22, 1529, providing an approximate date for the picture, and before that on July 26, 1489, providing a birthdate for the painter.

Dismissing Klauner's interpretation as unnecessarily esoteric, Whitfield (1966) reemphasized the connection to Alberti's dialogue and demonstrated its wide circulation at the Ferrarese court in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Emmens (1969) concurred but, accepting Klauner's improbable late date of 1529, proposed to read the picture as a political satire on the pusillanimous behavior of Francis I of France toward his erstwhile ally Ferrara: Francis is Jupiter, who has laid down his thunderbolt for a more effete occupation, while his courtier Mercury denies Virtue access to him. Equally unpersuasive is Calvesi's (1969a) theory that the picture compares the art of painting to the magic of alchemy. Biedermann (1982) saw the painting as an allegory of spring and identified the female figure as Flora, goddess of the spring and of flowers, an interpretation in keeping with the references in Alberti's text to the blossoming of cucumbers and the emergence of butterflies. In contrast, Barolsky (1978) warned against the dangers of overintellectualizing Dosso's picture and of underestimating the playfulness and fantasy with which the painter approached his subject.

Chastel (1984) produced a detailed attempt to account for the discrepancies (already highlighted by Klauner) between Dosso's picture and his pseudo-Lucianic text. For Chastel, the passionate gesture of the maiden and her profuse garlands of flowers signify Dosso's identification of her with Eloquence (or Rhetoric), who tries to impose her claims on Jupiter the creator; but Mercury, who assumes the role of Harpocrates, god of silence, gestures to her not to interfere with the silent art of painting, which achieves miracles unattainable through mere words. In this way Dosso transformed a fable about the neglect of Virtue by the frivolous gods to a *paragone*, or comparison,

between the sister arts of rhetoric and painting, with a verdict in favor of the latter. Elaborating on Chastel's interpretation, Biasini (1992) argued that in addition to representing Eloquence, the maiden can be identified⁵ as Iris, eloquent messenger of the gods. Iris is goddess of the rainbow, and her attribute is seen on the left. Like Klauner and Emmens, Biasini inferred from the realism of Jupiter's features that his image is a portrait; but she identified him as Duke Alfonso, the likely patron of the work. Thus Alfonso, the celebrated man of war with a special interest in artillery (hence the thunderbolt, with its flying sparks and edges of red-hot metal), would be portrayed here in his role as protector of the art of painting.

In the most recent study of the picture, Ciammitti (1998) reverts to calling the maiden Virtue and discusses apparent iconographical anomalies in the context of Dosso's overall approach to literary sources. She points out that some years later Dosso painted a rather more literal version of the same text at the castle of Buonconsiglio at Trent, in one of the monochrome frescoes in the vault of the Camera del Camin Nero (fig. 33). There, Virtue actually is shown seminaked and with loose hair as she approaches the gate of Jupiter's palace; and Mercury's gesture signifies, much more emphatically than in the canvas, that she should leave the gods in peace. Ciammitti points out that in the Vienna painting, Dosso is seeking less to tell a story than to identify the figures by means of their attributes, and she relates the elegant, garlanded apparel of Virtue to the description of Virtue in Andrea Alciati's influential *Emblematum Liber*, which, although not published until 1531, was circulating in manuscript form ten years earlier. Ciammitti also connects the Harpocratic gesture of Mercury to the Alciati work, which was certainly drawn on by Dosso later for his *Hercules and the Pygmies* of about 1535 (cat. no. 40). However, Ciammitti does not attempt to provide any detailed new reading of the iconography of the picture as a whole.

To summarize the present state of research, while a broad range of more or less attractive and convincing interpretations have been proposed, all are open to objection, amendment, or amplification in numerous particulars. Alberti's dialogue clearly did provide the starting point for the subject, and for that reason it seems appropriate to continue to call the female figure Virtue. It seems

clear, too, that the representation of Jupiter as a painter, a role not mentioned in the dialogue, is intended to carry some allegorical message about the art of painting analogous to that conveyed by the *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25). On the other hand, the precise reasons for the various other departures from the text, the precise message the picture is intended to convey, and even whether Dosso had precise intentions in these matters all remain open questions.

Certainly consistent with Chastel's interpretation of the picture as a eulogy of painting is the delight Dosso manifestly takes in visual effects that do not serve any particular mimetic function, such as the sparkle of gold on Jupiter's collar or the red edging of Mercury's peaked cap. At the same time, the composition is self-consciously classicizing and is dominated by three large-scale figures, the central one a heroic nude. Klauner perceptively related the placing of one seated figure behind another to similar arrangements in antique sarcophagus reliefs—and there, too, one figure often turns around, and windblown swirls of drapery are frequent.⁶ She also compared Virtue's pose with that of Raphael's kneeling figure of Psyche (ca. 1518) in the Sala di Psiche of the Villa Farnesina in Rome. Although this similarity is not particularly close, the comparison is supported by further observations by Mezzetti and Bayer that the pose of Jupiter is clearly derived from the pose of his counterpart also in the Sala di Psiche—perhaps by way of the print copy by Marcantonio or Agostino Veneziano's compositionally related engraving *Saint Matthew*.⁷

Critics have generally agreed that the classicizing ambition of Dosso's picture (which also results in the reduction of the landscape to a spatially unrelated background) indicates that it was painted in the middle decade of his career, after the Modena altarpiece of 1518–21 (fig. 1). Gibbons (1968), perhaps influenced by Klauner's external arguments for a connection to the year 1529, dated it to the end of the decade; but a majority of critics, including most recently Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), have rightly placed it somewhat earlier, about 1523–24. Thus, the meticulous finish, subtle tonal gradations, and accomplished foreshortening of Virtue's right arm all indicate that the picture's style postdates the somewhat uncouth Michelangelism of the Modena altarpiece and the *Allegory of Music*; but it has not yet acquired the hard surface and dark shadows that are clearly Dosso's response to the arrival of Giulio Romano in Mantua in 1524.



Fig. 78. Drawing visible on the reverse of *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue*, found during relining of the canvas

When the canvas was relined in 1964, it was discovered that the artist's underdrawing of the three figures—which had been sketched in nude, the drawing rapidly executed with the tip of the brush—had seeped through when it was made and is visible on the other side (fig. 78). Earlier in his career, Dosso had not prepared his compositions with even so sketchy an underdrawing, and this more planned procedure probably reflects his growing interest during the 1520s in the art of High Renaissance Rome. But, as x-ray photographs confirm (fig. 79), Dosso still characteristically treated his sketchy underdrawing as only a loose guide. At first, Virtue was represented kneeling on her right knee with her left leg raised. Certainly Jupiter's own technique is closer to Dosso's than to that of Central Italian artists—he paints the butterflies directly onto the canvas, dispensing with an underdrawing and holding his brush loosely, halfway down the handle.

PH

1. Magani 1989. See also Savini Branca 1965, pp. 288–90.

2. Boschini 1660 (1966 ed., pp. 602–3). The picture, now in a private collection, has recently reemerged: see Hüttinger 1985, pp. 32–33.

3. Sansovino 1663, p. 376.

4. For the Latin text of Alberti's *Virtus* with an Italian translation, see Garin 1952, pp. 640–45; for an English translation, see Alberti ca. 1430–40 (1987 ed., pp. 21–22).

5. As already assumed by Berenson and Calvesi.

6. Klauner 1964, p. 138, n. 4.

7. Mezzetti 1965a, p. 54, n. 76. Bayer 1998.

8. Mündler 1855–58 (1985 ed., p. 154).



Fig. 79. X-radiograph of *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* showing changes made to all three figures, especially that of Virtue

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting, which was restored in 1952 and 1984, is in good condition, although the dark glazes in the trees have been lost, exposing the blue substrate. The thread count of the canvas is 14 per centimeter vertically and 16 per centimeter horizontally. There is a horizontal seam, butt-jointed, with a fine canvas reinforcement. The vertical imprints of the original strainer bars can be seen in the center and at both sides. They all measure between 4.5 and 5 centimeters, indicating that the two edges are probably intact. No imprints of strainer bars can be found at either top or bottom, suggesting that at least 10 centimeters of height have been lost. Only the bottom edge shows cusping; however, it should be remembered that the painting might have been stretched vertically only, which could account for the absence of cusping on the sides.

A dark preparation, most likely black-brown, underlies the background and probably the sky. The preparation under the figure of Mercury seems to be dark brown, and this may also extend beneath the figure of Virtue. Under Jupiter's red cloak is a white lead preparation, whereas under Mercury's green veil the preparation is yellow (presumably lead-tin yellow).

The thickly painted areas, particularly those

that have a beaded effect, are probably painted with an oil-tempera emulsion. Areas of thick paint and sharp texture occur especially in Mercury's staff and Virtue's wreath of flowers and red sash. The yellow highlights on Jupiter's collar, the lightning bolt at his feet, and the small red strip of Mercury's feathered headgear all have the characteristics of a thick emulsion medium.

The x-radiograph shows a number of important changes: numerous alterations were made to the figure of Mercury, especially to his head and headgear, hand, and proper right knee. Jupiter's maulstick and brush were shortened and the butterflies modified. The silhouettes of all three figures were reworked. Virtue was depicted originally with her legs bare and in a different position; in an intermediate stage, wearing a skirt split up the side; and finally, fully clothed and kneeling.

When the relining backing was removed, a drawing was revealed (fig. 78), and the position of Virtue's leg in the drawing coincides with that of the first painted version, seen in the x-radiograph. Undoubtedly the drawing was made on the front of the unprimed canvas and leaked through, because if it had been made on the back, the crossbar (whose location is evident from an imprint) would have interfered with the delineating of Mercury's leg.

28. *Apollo*

In one of his most powerful mythological images, Dosso portrays the Olympian god of music and poetry just as he concludes a lament over the loss of Daphne, the shy, elusive nymph for whom he conceived an obsessive passion. Apollo raises his arm with a flourish, holding aloft the bow of his fiddle; the fingers of his left hand are still positioned on the strings after striking the final chord, and his lips are still parted as his song ends.¹ According to Ovid's retelling of the well-known myth in *Metamorphoses* (1:450 ff.), Apollo had nearly caught up with the fleeing maiden when she uttered a desperate plea for help to her father, the river god Peneus, and escaped her pursuer by being metamorphosed into a laurel tree. Daphne is represented in the left background—with the waters of the Peneus beyond—at the very moment when she begins to blend into the surrounding vegetation. The lamenting god wears an evergreen laurel wreath in perpetual honor of his lost love.

With the exception of the Borghese inventory of 1693, inventories of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries consistently call the subject of this picture Orpheus,² a perfectly understandable identification. Orpheus was a musician, singer, and poet who lost his wife, Eurydice, even after he descended to the Underworld to rescue her; the vanishing nymph in this painting could well be interpreted as Eurydice, the dark river as the Styx, and the city with its infernal glow as Hades. Furthermore, Dosso's picture is a highly unusual representation of its theme. By the early sixteenth century the Apollo and Daphne story was well established in Italian painting, and Isabella d'Este's court humanist Paride da Ceresara explicitly recommended it as a suitable subject for painters. But the moment depicted was invariably the climax of the chase, and in any case, neither Ovid nor any other literary source mentions a musical lament by Apollo over the loss of Daphne.³ Yet, close scrutiny of Dosso's nymph confirms that she is sprouting branches and leaves and must indeed be Daphne; thus the musician must be Apollo, not Orpheus. In his very free and original visualization of the subject, Dosso was certainly inspired by Raphael's celebrated *Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican (ca. 1505–11), where the central figure of

Apollo, his gaze turned upward, similarly plays a *lira da braccio* (or viol), a Renaissance instrument, rather than an authentically antique lyre. But to the extent that Dosso's figure is more expressive of human despair than of divine inspiration, the painter may well also have had in mind the moving and tragic story of the musician Orpheus.

The basis for Dosso's tendency to deal with his subject matter in a distinctly unusual way, as exemplified by this painting and others (see cat. nos. 12, 27), remains a matter of debate. Perhaps he was motivated by poetic fantasy and a willful delight in subverting and transposing traditional iconography; perhaps the purpose was allegorical, and his work may be explained by reference to humanistic glosses on antique myths, often of a moralizing nature, written by contemporaries. One scholar who follows this line of thought, Del Bravo (1994), stressed the importance of the humanist Mario Equicola in Dosso's cultural environment and interpreted the *Apollo* in terms of Equicola's claim that music and poetry, embodied by the sun god, reflect the harmony of the universe. In a similar vein, Gentili (1980) accounted for the unusual composition, with Daphne consigned to the background and the emphasis placed on Apollo the divine musician, by pointing to the interpretation of the myth in *Dialoghi d'Amore* by the influential Spanish and Italian poet Leone Ebreo (ca. 1460–ca. 1521).

It was noted by Della Pergola (1955) that the *Apollo* was probably one of a group of pictures, also including the Aeneas frieze (cat. no. 24), that were acquired by Scipione Borghese from the Este castle in Ferrara in 1607. As evidence she quoted a document of 1612 which records that when the frieze was reframed soon after its arrival in Rome, a “ritratto d'Orfeo” (an image of Orpheus) was hung directly beneath it.⁴ Doubts about whether that *Orpheus* was in fact the *Apollo* have been raised in an unpublished paper by Sebastian Schütze showing that the *Apollo* was given to the Borghese collection only in 1659, by Cardinal Luigi Capponi.⁵ Further, as Fredericksen (1998) points out, it may, therefore, be identical with an *Orpheus* by Dosso that was recorded in 1623 and again in 1633 (when it was briefly called an *Apollo*) in the collection of another cardinal-nephew, Ludovico Ludovisi.⁶ But since Scipione

Ca. 1524
Oil on canvas, 75 1/4 ×
45 5/8 in. (191 × 116 cm)
Galleria Borghese,
Rome 1

Not in exhibition

Provenance
Probably Cardinal
Scipione Borghese, Rome
(by 1612); Possibly
Cardinal Ludovico
Ludovisi, Rome (1623
inv., no. 205, and 1633
inv., no. 24); Cardinal
Luigi Capponi, Rome; his
bequest to the Borghese
collection, Rome (1659);
Giovanni Battista
Borghese, Rome (1693
inv., no. 61); Quadreria
Borghese, Palazzo di
Campo Marzio, Rome
(ca. 1790 inv., as by
Caravaggio)

References
A. Venturi 1882, p. 19;
Morelli 1890 (1892 ed.,
p. 215; 1991 ed., pp.
277–78); A. Venturi 1893,
p. 17; Gruyer 1897, vol. 1,
p. 410, vol. 2, p. 286;
Berenson 1907, p. 210;
Gardner 1911, pp. 160–61;
Zwanziger 1911, p. 71;
Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 33,
72–74; A. Venturi 1928,
pp. 958–60; Berenson
1932, p. 175; Stechow
1932, pp. 68–69;
Barbantini in Ferrara
1933, p. 158; A. Venturi
1933, p. 389; Longhi 1934
(1956 ed., p. 86); Bodmer
1943, p. xxxviii; Della
Pergola 1955, pp. 30–31;
Longhi 1963, pp. 58–60;

Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 363–64, 366, 373–74, p. 26 (1965); Puppi 1964, p. 31; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 38, 109–10; Middeldorf 1965, p. 172; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, pp. 97, 128, 195–96; Giraud 1968, p. 249; Calvesi 1969b, p. 172; Fehl 1969 (1992 ed., p. 144); Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 318); Gentili 1980 (1988 ed., p. 116); Camiz in Ferrara 1983, pp. 89–90; Trevisani in Rovigo 1984, p. 155; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 417–18; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 95–96, 343–44; Del Bravo 1994, p. 80; Fredericksen 1998; Smyth 1998

Borghese is known to have presented Bernini's *Pluto and Proserpina* (Galleria Borghese, Rome) to Cardinal Ludovisi in about 1620, it is perfectly possible that he gave him other works of art, including Dosso's picture, as well.⁷ In that case the 1612 document would indeed refer to the *Apollo*, which would then have passed from the Ludovisi collection to the Capponi collection sometime after 1633 and reentered the Borghese collection in 1659. In any case, it is clear that the picture arrived in Rome together with other spoils from Ferrara in the years immediately after the devolution of 1598.

It is also highly probable that a picture so grand and masterly as this was painted for Dosso's principal patron, Duke Alfonso. Gibbons (1968) rightly emphasized that several other important paintings by Dosso, including the *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25) and the *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38), have similarly musical themes, reflecting the strong musical tradition at the Ferrarese court. Developing this idea, Camiz (in Ferrara 1983) noted that Alfonso was himself an accomplished player of the *lira da braccio*—a circumstance that might well justify the incorporation into this painting of a modern instrument—and also that he had a special interest in Apollo, since he owned at least two antique statues of the god. Camiz also plausibly suggested that the choice of subject was connected to the favor enjoyed by Alfonso's mistress Laura Dianti after the death of Lucrezia Borgia in 1519, and observed that Dosso decorated the ceilings of Laura's Palazzina della Rosa with laurel leaves surrounding a central sun, implying an obvious symbolic association of Laura with Daphne and of Alfonso with Apollo.

Consistent with this interpretation is the generally accepted dating of the picture to the mid-1520s. Although Mendelsohn (1914) and Dreyer (1964–65) placed the work somewhat earlier, in the late teens, Gibbons was certainly right to see the powerfully built and vigorously posed male nude as a later variant on the trio of male saints in the Modena altarpiece, whose documented date is 1518–21 (fig. 1). Compared with the broadly painted altarpiece, however, and also with the *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* (cat. no. 22), the *Apollo* shows a new refinement in handling, which is par-

ticularly evident in the treatment of the god's hair as it meanders down along his ear, curling over its tip, and past his left shoulder. This elegance and the bold contrasts of light and shade now recall not so much Michelangelo as the late Raphael, and perhaps also, as Ballarin (in Paris 1993) implied, Raphael's former pupil Giulio Romano, who arrived in Northern Italy in 1524 to take up an appointment at the neighboring court of Mantua. Symptomatic of this new direction in Dosso's style is the fact that—although the emerald green of Apollo's drapery (even though abraded) retains a characteristic intensity, and the landscape is evoked with the artist's customary atmospheric breadth—the range of color is now more limited than it was in his works before about 1522, and the stress is correspondingly greater on the sculptural form of the principal figure.

PH

1. Camiz in Ferrara 1983, p. 89.

2. Inventory of Giovanni Battista Borghese, 1693, no. 61: “Un quadro di palmi sette e cinque con cornice dorata in tela con un Orfeo con la Lira in mano del N° . . . del Dosi di ferrara” (Della Pergola 1964–65, pp. 223, 228); inventory of Quadreria Borghese, Palazzo di Campo Marzio, ca. 1790: “Orfeo, Caravaggio” (Rinaldis 1937, p. 221, no. 21). The curious attribution to Caravaggio persisted for most of the nineteenth century, until Morelli correctly gave the picture to Dosso in 1875 (Morelli 1890 [1892 ed., p. 215]).

3. Stechow 1932, pp. 68–69; Giraud 1968, p. 249.

4. Della Pergola 1955, pp. 30, 152.

5. Schütze forthcoming; quoted in Coliva 1994, p. 123.

6. Ludovisi inventory of 1623, no. 205: “Un orfeo con la lira in mano, alto p. 10 in circa con Cornice nere profilate et rabescate d'oro” (A picture of Orpheus holding his lyre, about 10 *palmi* high, in a black frame with gilded arabesques). See Wood 1992, p. 521.

Ludovisi inventory of 1633, no. 24: “Un Apollo con la lira in mano quadro alto p. dieci cornice nera profilata rabescata d'oro di mano del Dossi” (An Apollo holding his lyre, 10 *palmi* high, in a black frame with gilded arabesques, by Dosso). See Garas 1967, p. 340; the author suggested there an identification with the Borghese *Apollo*. The recorded height of ten *palmi* (= 223 cm) is somewhat greater than that of the picture in its present state, and it may be that the upper edge, which would include a continuation of Apollo's bow, has been trimmed. The technical study indeed suggests that the painting has been cut slightly at top and bottom.

7. This very plausible suggestion was kindly pointed out to me by Kristina Herrmann Fiore.





Fig. 80. Drawing found on the reverse of *Apollo* during relining of the canvas

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of this painting is generally very good, especially the landscape portion. The exception is Apollo's green cloak, which is severely abraded. There is also some abrasion in the proper left eye. During the most recent restoration in 1982–83, the repainted laurel wreath was removed, revealing the original version. At that time the old lining canvas was also removed, and a drawing of a figure in profile was found on the reverse of the original canvas (fig. 80).

The canvas is a plain weave with 15–17 horizontal threads per centimeter and 22–23 vertical threads per centimeter. It has a vertical butt-join, clearly visible in the x-radiograph, which is covered by a strip of fine canvas. Original strainer imprints were found about 4 centimeters from the top and bottom edges, indicating approximately 2 centimeters lost in both directions; at 6 centimeters from the right, indicating that the edge is intact; and at 5 centimeters from the left. No cusping was found at any of the edges.

The preparation is dark brown. Substrate colors include blue for the sky (on which parts of the

landscape are painted), yellow for the green robe, gray-green or dark blue for the landscape and trees, gray for Apollo's torso, gray-black for the ground and hill beyond, and a dark tone for the viol. Some trees with brown leaves silhouetted against the blue sky were apparently painted that way from the first, as the pigment does not seem to be a copper resinate that has changed from green to brown. There is "beading" in Daphne's white dress.

Remnants of finely painted hair can be seen (in infrared) in Apollo's eyebrows, and typically detailed strands of hair emerge from under the laurel wreath and fall over the ear. The fingernails are carefully drawn, and there is a little red dot in the corner of the eye.

The x-radiograph reveals a number of changes in the body of the viol, the design of the green robe, both hands, the ear, the laurel wreath, and parts of the landscape.

(Some information drawn from the Condition Report by M. Cardinali, M. B. De Ruggieri, C. Falcucci of EMMEBICI, Rome, and from Gianluigi Colalucci.)

29. *Venus and Cupid in a Landscape*

A very recent addition to the Dosso corpus, this picture departs from the Venetian tradition in which Venus is represented reclining in a landscape; instead, the goddess is shown rousing herself, while her son Cupid remains fast asleep. Also unusual for the genre is the reference to Venus's husband, Vulcan, who is shown busy at his forge in the right background. The inclusion of Vulcan supports the natural assumption that the picture was commissioned by Duke Alfonso. Himself an expert on metal-casting and the manufacture of weapons and artillery,¹ Alfonso liked to be identified with the god of fire, and Vulcan accordingly appears as the protagonist in at least two of Dosso's major works: the *Allegory of Music* (cat. no. 25), and the painter's large-scale contribution to the series of Bacchanal pictures for the duke's Camerino, now lost.² The influence of Venus, goddess of love, was another central theme of this series.

Publishing the picture for the first time, Ballarin

(1994–95) attributed it to Battista and dated it about 1528, without explaining his reasoning. But neither the sensuous, fleshy figure nor the fertile, poetically illuminated landscape has much in common with the work of Battista; and stylistically, *Venus and Cupid* fits comfortably with Dosso's own works of the mid-1520s. The poses of the two figures, like those in the *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* of about 1520–22 (cat. no. 22), betray an interest in the complex contrapposto of Michelangelo's Sistine *Ignudi*. The colors, while still warm and intense, differ from Dosso's color schemes of the second decade, having begun to show the restricted range seen in the *Saint Sebastian* painted for Cremona about 1525–26 (fig. 8). But the foreground lacks the still-life precision of the *Saint Sebastian* or of the *Allegory with Pan* of about 1529–32 (cat. no. 38), whose svelte, elegant reclining nude makes the evidently earlier Venus shown here look squat of feature and plump of limb, like the figures in the *Allegory of Music* of about

Ca. 1524
Oil on canvas, $53\frac{1}{8} \times 63$ in. (135×160 cm)
Nelson Shanks
collection, Andalusia,
Pennsylvania

Provenance
Savelli collection, Rome
(1610 inv. no. 39; 1650
inv.); Flavio Chigi, Rome
(from 1650); Chigi collec-
tion, Rome (1692 inv.);
art market, 1980s; present
owner

References
Ballarin 1994–95, p. 355;
Fredericksen 1998



1522 (cat. no. 25). The compositional likeness of *Venus and Cupid* to *Apollo*—in both cases the descending diagonal of a dark foil behind the figure is enlivened by the silhouettes of curling roots and branches, and nude flesh is offset by a broad expanse of emerald-green drapery edged with gold—confirms a date for this work too of about 1524. Sebastiano Filippi immediately echoed the face of Venus when he painted the Virgin in his *Visitation* (San Biagio, Lendinara), dated 1525 (fig. 108).

Further evidence supporting the attribution of *Venus and Cupid* to Dosso is provided by x-ray photographs, which show extensive pentimenti characteristic of the painter. In particular they reveal that Venus's face was originally tilted downward rather than upward; the thumb of her right hand was originally placed higher; and the contours of her body were modified. Cupid's face was turned more to the front.

Although the picture emerged in the 1980s without any provenance, Fredericksen (1998) has convincingly identified it with one listed in the 1692 inventory of the collection of Flavio Chigi, Rome, where it is described as “a canvas with a nude seated Venus, with a sleeping Cupid and a landscape, by the hand of Dosso.”³ As Fredericksen also shows, Chigi acquired it from the Savelli collection in 1650 (when its dimensions were given as approximately 6 by 7 Roman *palmi*, or 53 by 62 inches),⁴ together with other pictures by Dosso, including the Della Sale altarpiece from the cathedral of Ferrara (fig. 76). The Savelli family had already owned the *Venus* in 1610,⁵ only twelve years after Ferrara devolved to the papacy.

PH

1. Alfonso's biographer Paolo Giovio described this interest as follows: “Dandosi egli ancora a fonder metalli, a guisa di fabbro & a gittar cose di bronzo, gli successe tanto bene & felicemente tale arte, che egli trapassò, & superò col suo ingegno, si nel mescolare i metalli, con

maraugliosa temperatura, & si nel gittare artiglierie grandissime.” (Likewise devoting himself to working with metal like a smith, and to casting objects in bronze, he became highly successful in this craft, achieving great expertise in fusing metals at very high temperatures and in casting enormous pieces of artillery). See Giovio 1597, p. 16.

2. See cat. no. 24, n. 1.

3. “Un quadro Tela d’Imperatore cornice tutta dorata, con una Venere ignuda à sedere, con un Amorino, che Dorme, e Paese, mano del Dossi.” See Fredericksen 1998.

4. “Una Venere con l’Amorino in tela per traverso p.^{mi} 6 e 7 in c.^a de’ Dossi, D. 60.” See Campori 1870, p. 163.

5. Spezzaferro 1985.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of the painting is fairly good; the landscape and the sky are damaged, as is Venus's eye. The thread count is 13 per centimeter in both directions, and a butt-joined seam runs vertically through the center of the painting. There is pronounced cusping on three edges but very little at the right edge, which was probably cut. An imprint from the original strainer 6 centimeters from the bottom edge implies that the edge is intact. Several colors seem to have been used in the preparatory layers: dark gray under the cloth on which Venus lies, light gray in the sky, and off-white beneath the figure of Venus. Although no pigment analysis was done, the dark cloth is probably painted with orpiment-realgar, mixed with red earth colors. There is evidence of dabbing with a cloth on the green veil, which is painted over a yellow substrate. The x-radiograph shows many pentimenti: Venus originally glanced downward, and changes were made to her arms and hands, to the contours of the figure of Cupid, and to some of the drapery.

Two Female Saints

30a. *Saint Lucretia*

30b. *Saint Paula*

Similar in size, subject, and composition, these two little panels were clearly planned as companion pieces. Comparison between them, however, reveals a number of significant stylistic differences; probably the most striking is that Saint Lucretia is comparatively slim and her pose is uncertainly articulated, while Saint Paula is plumper and adopts a classicizing contrapposto. The pattern of small creases in the draperies of Saint Lucretia is also rather different from the broad, ample folds of Saint Paula's clothing.

Critics have sought to account for the contrast in various ways. Denying the traditional attribution of *Saint Lucretia* to Dosso, Gibbons (1968), followed by Shapley (1979), called it inferior in quality to *Saint Paula* and attributed it instead to Battista; he dated them about the same time (early 1520s). Dreyer (1964–65), on the other hand, accepted *Saint Lucretia* as Dosso's but gave *Saint Paula* to Battista, presumably because he regarded the more evolved pose as more Raphaelesque. Ballarin (1994–95) agreed with Dreyer's attributions, but instead of seeing the two pictures as contemporaneous, he dated *Saint Lucretia* about 1516 and *Saint Paula* considerably later, about 1524.

While there is no good reason to attribute either picture to Battista, Ballarin's dating seems close to the mark. Particularly convincing is his placing *Saint Lucretia* in the same year as the *Virgin and Child with a Bishop Saint, an Angel, and a Donor* in Budapest (cat. no. 9); besides the slim female figure types and lack of clarity in the pose, common stylistic features include the richly glowing Venetian colors, and both pictures also contain the motif of a statue in a niche, otherwise rare in Dosso. Although Ballarin dates both works to about 1516, it has been argued above that the Budapest *Virgin and Child* was painted slightly earlier, about 1514; and indeed, the *Saint Lucretia* fits comfortably with that date, since its landscape is still very close to that of the Costabili polyptych of 1513 (cat. no. 6). The landscape in *Saint Paula* is much lighter in tonality and lacks the dramatic chiaroscuro of *Saint Lucretia*, and Ballarin is correct to see that the *Saint Paula* land-

scape and well-built, twisting figure belong to the period of the *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* of about 1523–24 (cat. no. 27).

Without their inscriptions—possibly not painted by Dosso himself, but certainly old—the two saints would be impossible to identify; indeed, both are extremely rare subjects in Italian art. Saint Lucretia of Mérida, here given the attributes of a palm and a book of devotion, presumably a Bible, suffered martyrdom in ninth-century Spain. Saint Paula, shown with a Bible and crucifix, was, with her more famous but uncanonized daughter Eustochium, a close disciple of Saint Jerome. Why these saints were chosen was pointed out by Suida (1949) and Waterhouse (1952), respectively: Lucretia was the name saint of Alfonso's duchess, Lucrezia Borgia, herself a Spaniard; and Paola would have been an appropriate patron saint for

30a. *Saint Lucretia*
Ca. 1514
Oil on panel, 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (53 x 42 cm)
Inscribed:
S. LVCRETIA
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.,
Samuel H. Kress
Collection 1939.1.388
Not in exhibition

30b. *Saint Paula*
Ca. 1524
Oil on panel, 21 x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (53.3 x 41.9 cm)
Inscribed: SANCTA
PAVLA ORA P[ER]
ME [Saint Paula, pray
for me]
Private collection

Provenance
30a: Probably Lucrezia
Borgia, duchess of Ferrara
(d. 1519); Cardinal
Antonio Barberini, Rome
(1663 inv., no. 121; 1672
inv., no. 257);² Prince
Maffeo Barberini, Rome
(after 1672 inv., no. 214;
1686 inv.; no. 233);³ Ugo
Ferraguti, Rome (until
1932);⁴ part of
Rospigliosi sale, Galleria
Tavazzi, Rome
(Dec. 12–24, 1932, no. 390);
Dr. A. Porcella, Rome;
Jacob Heimann, New
York (until 1938); Samuel
H. Kress, New York (from
1939);⁵ National Gallery
of Art, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 81. Dosso or Battista Dossi, *Five Saints*. Pen and brown wash with white heightening. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts Graphiques, inv. no. 10672

30b: Probably Laura Dianti, Ferrara; earl of Haddington, Tynningham (by 1907);⁶ sale, Christie's, London (November 28, 1975, no. 76); Matthiesen, London (1978)

References

30a: Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 162; A. Venturi 1933, p. 389; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 88); Suida 1949; Waterhouse 1952; Arslan 1957, p. 260; Dreyer 1964–65, p. 366; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 17, 124–25; Berenson 1968, p. 114; Gibbons 1968, pp. 125–26, 235; Shapley 1968, p. 74; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 317); Fredericksen and Zeri 1972, p. 67; Shapley 1979, pp. 162–64; London 1984, p. 87; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 304–5

30b: Berenson 1907, p. 211; Mendelsohn 1914, p. 215; A. Venturi 1928, p. 978; Waterhouse 1952; Dreyer 1964–65, p. 374, n. 71; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 17, 121; Berenson 1968, p. 114; Gibbons 1968, pp. 126, 210; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 317); Shapley 1979, pp. 162–64; London 1984, p. 87; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 340



30a

Alfonso's later mistress Laura Dianti, also called Eustochia, neither of whose names would have provided her with her own name saint. Since most critics in the past have assumed that *Saint Lucretia* dates from the 1520s, it has generally been accepted that the picture was commissioned by Alfonso in memory of the duchess, who died in 1519. If, however, the work dates from about 1514, it was

more probably commissioned by Lucrezia Borgia herself for her private devotion. In keeping with this supposition is the luxurious effect of the gold extensively used in the headdress, collar, sleeve, and hem of the robe as well as in the halo. *Saint Paula* would then have been commissioned after Lucrezia's death, probably by Laura Dianti, in deliberate emulation of *Saint Lucretia*, and as a way



30b

of signaling her own status as successor to the duchess. In any case, the two panels may never have been intended to hang together; in fact, the gazes and poses of the two figures do not balance one another but instead are turned in the same direction.

A drawing in Paris representing five saints (fig. 81), among them a female saint posed identi-

cally to *Saint Paula*, has been attributed to Dosso by Pouncey and Ballarin.¹ Since he attributed *Saint Paula* to Battista, Ballarin presumably thought that the painting was adapted from the drawing. But it is more likely that the reverse was the case, that Battista borrowed the figure in Dosso's painting to make it the centerpiece of his self-consciously Raphaelesque drawing. It should

be noted that the head of the male figure second from the left was borrowed with similar literalness from the figure of Jupiter in Dosso's *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue*.

PH

1. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts Graphiques, 10672. Philip Pouncey, unpublished comment; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 340.
2. 1663, no. 121: "Un'Altro quadro di Grandezza simile rappresentante S. Lucretia mano del Dossi di Ferrara Con Cornice intagliata dorata"; 1672, no. 257: "Un'Altro Simile di Grandezza [i.e. 2 *palmi* high], rappresenta S. Lucretia mano del Dossi, Con Cornice dorata." See Lavin 1975, pp. 297, 346.
3. Post-1672, no. 214: "Una Santa Lucretia In Tavola . . . alta p.^m 2½ e larga p.^m 2 In Circa con Cornice liscia dorata"; 1686, no. 233: "Una Santa Lucretia intavola, che tiene, con una mano un libro, e' dall'altra una Palma alta p.ⁱ 2¼ larga p.ⁱ 1½ in circa, con cornice liscia dorata mano del Dossi di Ferrara." See Lavin 1975, pp. 371, 404.
4. E. Sestieri, catalogue of Rospigliosi sale, Galleria Tavazzi, Rome, December 12–24, 1932, no. 390; with information that an old inscription, "Portato da Ferrara," was legible on the back.
5. Provenance in Shapley 1979, p. 163.
6. Berenson 1907, p. 211.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

30a. *Saint Lucretia*

The painting is in very good condition. An extremely dark gray-brown preparation is made up of lead white, charcoal, brown earth, and a high proportion of extenders in oil (these might be the clay, or *terra di campana*, mentioned in a treatise by Armenini; see Berrie and Fisher 1993). The highlights in the saint's hair, her halo, the decoration of her dress, and the top edge of the book are painted with a gold powder called shell gold; probably her name was inscribed on the back wall in silver, which has oxidized. The dark blue substrate beneath the trees has become quite visible because the glazes on the trees have been abraded. There are signs of dabbing on the lower edge of the saint's red dress. Very light fingerprints were found on those areas of dark green that are still well preserved; the dark green was painted over a substrate of lead-tin yellow mixed with green.

31. *Sibyl*

Ca. 1524–25
Oil on canvas, 27 1/8 ×
25 1/4 in. (69 × 64 cm)
Inscription (on tablet):
LVX NON
DA.../TVR...ABISO
[Light is not given to
the abyss]
State Hermitage
Museum, Saint
Petersburg 7

Like the closely contemporary *Apollo* (cat. no. 28), this picture reflects Dosso's fascination with exploring emotions, an interest that perhaps originated during his early days in Mantua, where he encountered works by Leonardo da Vinci and Lorenzo Costa. Here, the sibyl, who personifies poetic clairvoyance and prophetic inspiration, is shown looking into the distance at events of the future. Dressed in a blue robe and a cloak of an extraordinary gold color streaked with shadows, very similar to that of Virtue in *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* (cat. no. 27), the figure is shown behind a parapet, with her head turned sharply to the right. It is as if she has just looked up from meditating on the tablet she holds in her hands to gaze longingly at the coming of Christianity.

The parapet, the pose, the composition, and the dimensions of the work all suggest that it was not intended as a self-sufficient picture but belonged to a series, a sort of female counterpart to *Learned Men of Classical Antiquity* (cat. no. 22). However, no similar pictures exist that could have been part of such a set.

The first to speculate that the canvas was one of a series, Lionello Venturi (1912), suggested that it came from Duke Alfonso's suite of rooms between the Este castle and the palace. He proposed as a possible companion piece another *Sibyl*, recorded in the inventory of the collection of Roberto Canonici, Ferrara, in 1632: "A Sibyl in half-length by Dosso, holding a book in her hand, inscribed with the words 'A summo caelo egressus eius.'"¹¹

Thus, the circumstances under which the present work was painted are unclear, and little light is shed on them by the picture's known provenance. As Kustodieva (1994) noted, it belonged to Consul Gessler, who acquired it in Spain during his term of office in Cadiz. It was then described as the work of Gaspar Becerra, as the inscription on a label glued to the back of the canvas testifies. The painting may have entered the collection of the Hermitage through the efforts of Prince Volkonsky in 1814.

The attribution to Becerra was perpetuated in Hermitage catalogues throughout the nineteenth century; and, incredibly, it was recently revived by

Provenance
Consul Gessler, Cadiz
(? [as by Gaspar Becerra]);
Prince P. M. Volkonsky
(1814); State Hermitage
Museum, Saint Petersburg
(from 1815)



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Gaya Nuño (1958) and Camón Aznar (1970), despite the attribution to Dosso already made by Lionello Venturi in 1912 and thereafter otherwise unanimously accepted. Venturi regarded the picture as a late work, close to the Capitoline *Holy Family* (cat. no. 33) and the Modena rhomboids (cat. no. 26); Mendelsohn (1914) dated it instead to about 1516–18; Mezzetti (1965a) placed it in the mid-1520s, or perhaps slightly earlier; Ballarin (in Paris

1993) suggested a date of 1524–25. Adolfo Venturi (1928) and Bargellesi (1955) also put the picture close to the Modena rhomboids, while Gibbons (1968) and Kustodieva (1994) dated it to the 1530s.

Of these suggested datings, that of 1524–25 is the most convincing. In addition to the already mentioned resemblance of the satin drapery to Virtue's in the Vienna *Jupiter*, the treatment of the eyes—wide open, with hard, reflective surfaces—

References
L.Venturi 1912,
pp. 215–17; L.Venturi
1913, p. 195; Mendelsohn
1914, pp. 70–71; A.Venturi
1928, pp. 947–48;
Berenson 1932, p. 174;
Bargellesi 1955, p. 96;
Gaya Nuño 1958, p. 111;

Mezzetti 1965a, p. 92; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 136–37, 183–84; Camón Aznar 1970, p. 427; Saint Petersburg, Hermitage 1976, p. 93; Milan 1977, p. 36; Vsevolozhskaya 1981, no. 64; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 417; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 95, 341; Del Bravo 1994, p. 80; Kustodieva 1994, pp. 150–51

immediately recalls that in the *Apollo* (cat. no. 28). The *Sibyl* shares with the *Apollo* a relationship to Raphaelism and in particular to Giulio Romano; both pictures may therefore be thought to embody Dosso's initial response to the arrival of Giulio in Mantua in 1524. The highly refined yet curiously abstract treatment of the sibyl's hair, with the locks flattened into broad waves, is also very close to the manner of Giulio and recurs in Dosso's *Man Embracing a Woman* from the Camera del Poggio, which is documented to the years 1524–26 (cat. no. 32a). The influence of Raphael himself, in particular of his *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 4), is clearly evident in the ribbon that binds the sibyl's hair, with its highlights and fringes. While similar ribbons and fringes already appeared in the Costabili polyptych of 1513 (cat. no. 6), they are handled differently here, with the droplets of color much less thickly applied and with much less impasto. The earring recalls those described in Canto VII of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, "Each ear was pierced by a fine gold ring from which a fat pearl hung,"² and is very similar, although not identical, to the one worn by Venus in *Venus and Cupid* (cat. no. 29), also of about 1524.

X-ray photographs made by the Hermitage have revealed that the sibyl's face was originally seen frontally and also that a small head was painted in the upper left. These alterations are typical examples of the working methods that Dosso acquired during his early career in Venice and show him creating the figure not on the basis of preparatory drawings but directly on the canvas, as the painting progressed.

No attempt has been made to determine which of the sibyls is represented, and the inscription on the tablet is of no help in this respect. But the blue robe suggests that she might be either the Libyan Sibyl or the Cimmerian Sibyl, since blue garments were associated with both of them from the fifteenth century on.³

The other canvas showing a sibyl, which, on the basis of the Canonici inventory of 1632, Lionello Venturi thought might be a second in the series, has turned out instead to be a later-sixteenth-century copy of the present painting (fig. 82). It is of mediocre quality and deviates somewhat in the colors of the garments and in the inscription. Published as autograph by Adolfo Venturi (1938) and accepted as such by Bargellesi (1955), Mezzetti (1965a), and Gibbons (1968), who regarded it as a second version of the Hermitage *Sibyl*, the picture

was demoted to the status of a copy by Roberto Longhi (in an annotation on the back of the photograph) and by Ballarin (1994–95). Probably the painting that was recorded in the Canonici collection, it came from the Perotti-Venturi collection in Modena, then belonged to the Foresti collection in Carpi, in 1950 was with the dealer Pilo in Milan and subsequently with Berlano, and was last heard of at a sale in Milan in 1962.⁴

Surprisingly, the inscription on the tablet in the copy, "Summo So.../...Egressio/Eius," does not belong to any known sibyllic prophecy but instead quotes the words of the prophet David, "A summo coelo egressio eius," His going forth is from the height of the heavens (Psalms 18:7 [Vulgate]). The Erythrean Sibyl is usually paired with David in the not uncommon joint portrayals of sibyls and prophets, but it is probably not she who is represented here, since she is customarily described as a fifty-year-old woman holding a sword.⁵ The subject of this copy is perhaps the Samian Sibyl, who comes immediately after David in the canon of twelve sibyls and prophets and who is described as twenty-four years old, dressed in ruby red.⁶ The existence of the copy raises the question of whether there was once a second series of sibyls; but the copy's inferior quality, careless iconography, and close imitation of the Saint Petersburg *Sibyl* all make it improbable that even this copy version ever belonged to a series.

ML



Fig. 82. Unknown artist, *Sibyl* (copy after Dosso Dossi). Location unknown

1. "Una Sibilla dal mezo in su del Dosso, ha un libro in mano con queste lettere, *a Summo coelo egressio eius.*" See *Copia del testamento* 1632; Campori 1870, p. 107.
2. VII:54; quoted in Ariosto 1974, p. 66.
3. The modern canon of twelve sibyls could be seen in the fifteenth-century cycle of Palazzo Orsini, Rome (now destroyed) and was described in contemporaneous manuscripts; see Hélin 1936, pp. 360, 364; Clercq 1978–79, pp. 109–11; Settis 1985, pp. 440, 449, 456.
4. Finarte, Milan, May 15–16, 1962, no. 83. The picture is illustrated in Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 1, fig. 174. For the provenance, see Ballarin 1994–95, p. 341.
5. Hélin 1936, p. 360.
6. Ibid., p. 361.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is good, although the surface is somewhat obscured by a yellow varnish.

Details include red dots in the corners of the eyes and carefully painted fingernails. In flesh tones and finish the painting shares many characteristics with later works of Dosso such as the *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41) and *Saint Catherine* (Galleria Borghese, Rome).

Fragments of the Ceiling Roundel from the Camera del Poggiolo

32a. *Man Embracing a Woman*

32b. *Boy with a Basket of Flowers*

These two informal genrelike representations are fragments of a large wooden roundel that was once the principal element of the ceiling decoration in the Camera del Poggiolo (Balcony Room). The room was situated in the middle of the Via Coperta that ran between the Este castle and the ducal palace in Ferrara; its balcony is still to be seen on the exterior of the building, facing the present-day Piazza Savonarola (fig. 17). The execution of the roundel is documented by notations of payments to Dosso dated September 3 and December 22, 1524, and, of reimbursements to him for his purchase of expensive ultramarine pigment for the project on September 26, 1524, and January 5, 1526.¹ According to an inventory of the possessions of Cesare d'Este drawn up at the time of the devolution of Ferrara to the papacy in 1598, the painted roundel formed the centerpiece of a ceiling decoration that otherwise consisted of a pattern of carved and gilded rosettes.²

As the property of Cesare d'Este, the roundel should have followed him to his new court at

Modena, but by mistake it was ceded in 1608 to Ezio Bentivoglio, agent of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, and sent to Rome, together with the Aeneas frieze (cat. no. 24) and the set of rhomboids from the ceiling of Duke Alfonso's neighboring bedroom (cat. no. 26).³ A letter of March 22, 1608, from the papal vice-legate in Ferrara, Innocenzo Massimo, describes the roundel as a "large circular picture with five heads, five *palmi* across, very beautiful and unusual."⁴ The picture was described once again in a Borghese inventory taken before 1633 (see p. 72), and these descriptions were confirmed and expanded by Manilli in his account of the Borghese collection in 1650, in which mention is made of "a circular picture by the Dossi, with a twelve-sided frame, representing five heads. These include a portrait of Gonnella as an old man, and next to him is a tall personage."⁵ The panel is recorded again in Montelatici's guidebook of 1700,⁶ but no further mention follows; like the Aeneas frieze and two of the allegorical rhomboids (cat. nos. 26a, 26g), it

32a. *Man Embracing a Woman*
1524–26
Oil on panel, $21\frac{5}{8} \times 29\frac{3}{4}$ in. (55×75.5 cm)
National Gallery,
London 1234

32b. *Boy with a Basket of Flowers*
1524–26
Oil on canvas, transferred from panel,
 $26\frac{1}{2} \times 25\frac{5}{8}$ in.
(67.3×65.2 cm)
Private collection



32a

Provenance

32a: Camera del Poggio, Castello Estense, Ferrara; Cardinal Scipione Borghese, Rome (1608–33); Borghese collection, Rome (until after 1700); Mr. King, London (until 1828); T. G. Bulkeley Owen (1828–68; Owen sale, Christie's, London, April 30, 1868, no. 198, as *Boccaccio and Fiammetta* by Giorgione); John Heugh, London (1868–78; his sale, Christie's, London, May 11, 1878, no. 276); sale, Christie's, London,

must have left the Borghese collection sometime during the eighteenth century. Presumably at that time or in the early nineteenth century it was sawn into three fragments in order to make it more marketable. The third fragment, now lost, must have shown the pair of male figures mentioned by Manilli.

Physical examination and conservation of the two surviving fragments, undertaken in the 1970s, confirmed that they belong with one another and revealed the extent of their mistreatment during the intervening centuries. As shown by Galli (1977) and Braham and Dunkerton (1981), in both cases the fragment was cut from the circular field with an irregular profile, like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, and then built up into a rectangle and overpainted to disguise the additions. At some



Fig. 83. Reconstruction of the ceiling tondo, showing the probable original positions of the surviving fragments, by Jill Dunkerton



32b

point the *Boy with a Basket of Flowers* was transferred to a canvas support. Scraps of wood used to fill out the *Man Embracing a Woman* were sawn from the discarded remains of the roundel, so that, for example, part of the hand belonging to the woman's extended right arm has now been found at the lower edge of the picture. X-ray photographs of the London panel undertaken during conservation suggest that the man was originally intended to be bareheaded.⁷

As a result of their analysis, Braham and Dunkerton were able to provide a reconstruction of the entire roundel that shows how the two fragments were originally positioned in it (fig. 83). According to the reconstruction, the diameter was about 140 centimeters, or 4½ feet (actually slightly longer than the five *palmi* cited by the vice-

legate); painted around the circumference was a gray molding resembling a parapet, and behind it the five figures were seen, bust-length, against a blue sky. The illusionistic conceit derives ultimately from Mantegna's ceiling decoration for the Camera degli Sposi of the ducal palace in Mantua; more recently and locally it had been taken up by Garofalo in the ceilings he painted for the Sala del Teseo in the Palazzo Costabili (ca. 1506) and for the ground-floor room in the Palazzo Sacrati, now the Palazzo del Seminario (1519), both in Ferrara. In these three predecessors, as in Dosso's roundel, the figures wear contemporary dress and appear to be just on the other side of an architectural opening. Dosso must have been attracted by the wit of Mantegna's idea, which he developed further in his figure of the boy, who, as Braham and

(June 25, 1887, no. 123); Charles Fairfax Murray, London (1887); bought from him by the National Gallery, London (1887)⁹

32b: Camera del Poggiolo, Castello Estense, Ferrara; Cardinal Scipione Borghese, Rome (1608–33); Borghese collection, Rome (until after 1700); Roberto Longhi, Florence (by 1955)

References

32a: Benson in London 1894, p. xxxi; Berenson 1907, p. 209; Gardner 1911, p. 233; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 70–71; L. Venturi 1913, p. 194; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 95–96; Baldass 1926, p. 111; A. Venturi 1928, p. 976; Berenson 1932, p. 174; Baldass 1961, pp. 84–85; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 48, 93; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 130, 184; Gould 1975, pp. 81–82; Galli 1977, pp. 54–57; Braham and Dunkerton 1981, pp. 27–37; Bacchi in Venice 1990, p. 78; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 415; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 89, 342–43; Hochmann 1998

32b: Bargellesi 1955, p. 95; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 85–86; Berenson 1968, p. 111; Gibbons 1968, pp. 121, 179; Boschetto 1971, no. 37; B. Wind 1975, pp. 70–73; Galli 1977, pp. 54–57; Gregori 1980, pp. 262–63; Braham and Dunkerton 1981, pp. 27–37; Bacchi in Venice 1990, p. 78; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 415; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 89, 343; Hochmann 1998

Dunkerton pointed out, seems about to empty his basket of flowers onto the heads of the spectators below. On the other hand, Dosso makes little attempt to enhance the illusionistic effect by radically foreshortening his figures; as in his other ceiling paintings (cat. no. 26), he represents them as if from only a little below. A slightly later example utilizing the same compositional idea—a work probably influenced by Dosso—is Nicolò dell'Abate's *Musicians* of about 1540 (Galleria Estense, Modena), originally from a ceiling in the castle of the counts Boiardo at Scandiano, near Modena.

Who Dosso's three figures are is difficult to determine. In the past, the *Man Embracing a Woman* has been called *The Poet Boccaccio with His Mistress Fiammetta* (with an attribution to Giorgione) and subsequently *A Muse Inspiring a Court Poet*, but these romantic titles have rightly been discarded by the National Gallery.⁸ B. Wind (1975) suggested, by analogy to later genrelike figures bearing flowers, that the painting of the boy is an allegory of spring, but this was before the revelation of its connection with the London picture, in which no such allegorical significance can be discerned. As has been mentioned, in 1650 Manilli referred to a figure in the now-missing fragment as "Gonnella." That was the name of the favorite buffoon of Niccolò III d'Este in the early fifteenth century, but the name was subsequently applied generically to a succession of Ferrarese court jesters; and even if the painted fragment survived, it would probably be difficult to decide, as it is with Dosso's early *Buffoon* of about 1510 (cat. no. 2), whether the image was intended as the recognizable portrait of a particular member of Alfonso's court or as the imaginary representation of an unspecified buffoon, although with portraitlike features. Of the surviving three figures of the ceiling decoration, the same interpretative problem applies to the man; but the woman and the boy were surely intended to be merely generic in character. Probably, as Braham and Dunkerton suggested, the unlikely coupling of a beautiful young maiden of vaguely mythological appearance with a portly middle-aged man in contemporary dress was meant to be amusing; and Hochmann (1998) has pointed out that ill-assorted couples were a



Fig. 84. Tullio Lombardo, *Bacchus and Ariadne*. Marble. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

standard feature of the theatrical comedies regularly performed at the Ferrarese court. The grinning boy also contributes to the lighthearted mood of the ensemble. What purpose the Camera del Poggiolo served is not known, but to judge from the decoration of its ceiling, it was a place for informal relaxation.

Baldass (1926) drew attention to the compositional similarity between the *Man Embracing a Woman* and a bust-length relief of about 1505, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, by the Venetian sculptor Tullio Lombardo (fig. 84). The resemblance certainly seems too close to be coincidental, especially since in the Tullio work the vine leaves in Bacchus's hair offer a striking prototype for the jasmine headdress on the woman painted by Dosso. Tullio's brother Antonio worked extensively for Duke Alfonso during the first decade of the century, and it may be, therefore, that the *Bacchus and Ariadne* or a similar piece was available for Dosso to see at the Ferrarese court.

These two fragments are a rare example of a documented work by Dosso and thus a valuable indicator of the artist's style in the mid-1520s. Particularly significant is the figure of the woman, which is painted with an attention to sculptural form and a crisp precision of outline and detail that are foreign to Dosso's works of the first decade but can be seen in pictures such as the Borghese *Apollo* and the Vienna *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* (cat. nos. 28, 27).

PH

1. Documents published by A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 442, pp. 48–49 (1893); see also Mezzetti 1965a, p. 61, and Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 197, 206. September 3, 1524: “Per compto de fare uno Tondo in la suffitta della via coperta” (In payment for making a roundel for a ceiling in the Via Coperta); December 22, 1524: “Per compto de fare uno tondo in lo suffitto della camara del Pozzuollo” (In payment for making a roundel for a ceiling in the Camera del Poggio). A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 442, no. xxiv, mistakenly gives the year as 1522.
2. Inventory drawn up by Alfonso del Benmambri, agent of Cesare d’Este, April 17, 1598, published by Mezzetti 1965a, p. 135. The ceiling is described as “Solaro dorato a rosoni di rilievo con uno sfondato in mezo di pittura” (fol. 2); and the shape of this central painting is specified (fol. 7) as a roundel: “Un altro quadro di pittura tondo nel solaro della Cam. contigua.”
3. Ibid.; Mezzetti 1965b, pp. 81–82, no. v.
4. “Uno tondo grande cinque palmi con cinque teste che è cosa bellissima et rara.” Mezzetti 1965a, p. 135; Mezzetti 1965b, p. 82, no. vi. See also Marcon, Maddalo, and Marcolini in Ferrara 1983, p. 98, n. 41, with a correction of the date from March 29 to March 22.
5. “Un quadro tondo, con la cornice à dodici facce, dentroi cinque teste, è de i Dossi. Si vede in questo quadro il ritratto del Gonnella, che è vn Vecchio, vicino ad vn Personaggio grande.” Manilli 1650, p. 100.
6. Montelatici 1700, p. 302.
7. Braham and Dunkerton 1981, p. 30.
8. Ibid., p. 27; Gould 1975, pp. 81–82.
9. Information on provenance from Gould 1975, pp. 81–82.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

32a. *Man Embracing a Woman*

This fragment of a large tondo is in good condition, except for extensive shrinkage crackle in the blue background and finer crackles in other areas. Analysis has shown that the medium is walnut oil on poplar. The painting has a gray preparatory layer. The natural ultramarine blue of the sky is painted over two layers of brown, on which are lead white with azurite and a layer of varnish; thus the natural ultramarine was probably added at a later stage (Braham and Dunkerton 1981, pp. 27, 29). The woman’s green mantle has been dabbed with a fine cloth; the substrate beneath it is painted with a mixture of verdigris and lead-tin yellow. The x-radiograph reveals various changes: the placement of the parapet has been altered, and the woman’s hair, now hung with jasmine flowers, was originally covered by a headdress made of yellow tufts. The man was probably bareheaded before his hat (which covers part of the woman’s forehead) was added later.

33. *Holy Family*

First recorded in 1624 in the collection of Cardinal Carlo Emanuele Pio di Savoia in Rome, this large canvas was presumably removed from the altar of some Ferrarese church in the aftermath of Ferrara’s devolution to the papacy in 1598. Cardinal Pio, who had lived in Ferrara in his youth, maintained close contacts with the city; a number of other objects in his collection, including pictures by Ortolano and Garofalo also now in the Capitoline, are known to have been bought or confiscated from Ferrarese religious institutions.¹ The fate of the *Holy Family* must thus have resembled that of Dosso’s *Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Bartholomew* (the Della Sale altarpiece; fig. 76), a work of similar dimensions and figure

scale, which, before being carried off to Rome, adorned the Della Sale family chapel in the left nave of Ferrara Cathedral. In style and date too, the *Holy Family* appears close to the Della Sale altarpiece, which is datable on external grounds to 1526–27, as well as to the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece, commissioned in 1527 (fig. 9, and see the biographical essay, p. 11). The figure of the Virgin, with its twisting position and grandiose dimensions, reflects in a general way the inspiration of Raphael’s *Sibyls* fresco of about 1512–13 (Santa Maria della Pace, Rome), which Dosso could have seen in Rome in 1513; but the contrived flattening of the pose and the dramatic spotlighting (seen too in the Della Sale altarpiece)

Ca. 1527–28
Oil on canvas, 92 7/8 ×
67 3/8 in. (236 × 171 cm)
Pinacoteca Capitolina,
Rome 1



also clearly demonstrate Dosso's interest in the work of Giulio Romano, in residence in nearby Mantua. Compared with the Della Sale altarpiece, however, the *Holy Family* shows a new preciosity—in the fine, small folds of the fabrics, in the high sheen on the Virgin's red robe and the pink shadows on the gray-blue lining of her cloak. Dosso was to develop effects like these even further in the Hampton Court *Holy Family* and the *Allegory with Pan* of a year or two later (cat. nos. 37, 38).

The reflection of Giulio in the *Holy Family*, and the resemblance between the Virgin's head and that of the standing female figure in the *Allegory with Pan*, were rightly pointed out by Ballarin (in Paris 1993), who also convincingly suggested a date for this picture of about 1528. Previously, Gibbons (1968) had dated it to the mid-1520s, while Mezzetti (1965a) saw it as a late work of about 1538; the opinions of both these scholars were consistent with their respective datings of the *Allegory with Pan*. Ballarin and Gibbons accepted the painting as a fully autograph work by Dosso, but Mezzetti, following Longhi (1940), may have been right in detecting the intervention of Battista. This is perhaps most evident in the head of Joseph, which is rather sensitively painted but lacks the bold vitality of Dosso's Virgin and shares the vacant expression of, for example, the saints in Battista's Portomaggiore altarpiece (fig. 12). The articulation of Joseph's stance also appears weaker than that of the similarly posed John the Evangelist in the Della Sale altarpiece, although admittedly the ruinous condition of Joseph's orange cloak makes this matter difficult to judge.

The traditional attribution to Dosso was retained throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the picture belonged to the Pio collection. But by the time it was obtained by the papacy in 1750 it had acquired an attribution to Palma Vecchio, and during the

nineteenth century it was called the work of Giorgione, until Morelli (1890) recognized its true author.

PH

1. See Testa 1994, pp. 94–95.
2. Inventory of 1624, no. 1: "Quadro uno grande della Mad." e S. Giuseppe et il puttino con cornice nera tocca d'oro in forma grande dei Dossi" (A large picture of the Madonna, Saint Joseph, and the Child, in a large black frame highlighted in gold, by the Dossi). See Testa 1994, p. 98.
3. Posthumous inventory of 1724, no. 128: "Altro quadro grande con la Madonna, quale tiene le mani su un libro grande, che tiene aperto, avanti di esso con una mostra un non sò che al Bambino, che li porge S. Giuseppe, in tela, alto palmi nove, e due terzi, largo sette, e mezzo, con cornice dorata, di Dosso Dossi" (Another large picture with the Madonna, who holds open a large book, showing something to the Child, who is held up by Saint Joseph. On canvas, 9½ *palmi* high, 7½ wide, with a gilt frame, by Dosso Dossi). See Guarino 1994, p. 122.
4. Inventory of 1750, no. 35: "Un gran quadro con cornice dorata, rappresentante la Madonna, il Bambino e S. Giuseppe, originale del Palma vecchio" (A large picture with a gilt frame, representing the Madonna, the Child, and Saint Joseph. An original by Palma Vecchio). See Guarino in Rome 1991–92, p. 57.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of the painting is fair: the landscape is damaged, and there are many areas of repainting done in a vertical *tratteggio* (hatched) stroke. The work was restored in 1985. Saint Joseph's cloak is in yellow orpiment. There are fingerprints in the paint of the Virgin's red blouse, which is red lake painted over a modeled white substrate. Probably the green glaze, which is painted over a yellow substrate, was also dabbed on. Eyelashes, eyebrows, and a dot in the corner of the eye can be seen on both the Virgin and Saint Joseph.

Provenance

Cardinal Carlo Emanuele Pio di Savoia, Rome (by 1624–1641; 1624 inv., no. 1);² by descent to Prince Francesco Pio di Savoia (1724 inv. of his estate, no. 128);³ Prince Gilberto Pio di Savoia (1750 inv., no. 35, as by Palma Vecchio);⁴ Camera Apostolica, Rome (1750–52); Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome (from 1752)

References

- A. Venturi 1889, pp. 442–43; Morelli 1890 (1892 ed., p. 217); Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, p. 287;
A. Venturi 1900, p. 36; Berenson 1907, p. 210; Gardner 1911, p. 155; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 43–44; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 33, 69–70;
A. Venturi 1928, pp. 948–49; Berenson 1932, p. 175; Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., p. 159); Puppi 1964, p. 31; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 45–46, 113–14; Middeldorf 1965, p. 172; Berenson 1968, pp. 113, 115; Gibbons 1968, pp. 129, 202; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 321); Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 422; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 105, 346–47; Bayer 1998

34. *Landscape with Saints*

Ca. 1527–28
Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 ×
34 1/4 in. (60 × 87 cm)
Pushkin State Museum
of Fine Arts, Moscow

Provenance
Vyazemsky-Sheremetev
House-Museum,
Ostafyevo (first half of
19th century?); Museum
of the History of
Religion, Donskoy
Monastery, Moscow;
Pushkin Museum,
Moscow (from 1933)¹

References
Lasareff 1939, pp. 13–18;
Lasareff 1941; Moscow,
Pushkin Museum 1948, p.
29; Francis 1950, p. 65;
Gombrich 1953, p. 346
(1966 ed., p. 114);
Moscow, Pushkin
Museum 1957, pp. 53–54;
Arslan 1957, p. 260;
Moscow, Pushkin
Museum 1961, pp. 76–77;
Mezzetti 1963a, pp.
102–3; Turner 1966, pp.
136–37; Berenson 1968, p.
112; Gibbons 1968, pp.
132, 191–92; Moscow,
Pushkin Museum 1989, p.
76; Markova 1992, p. 141;
Ballarin in Paris 1993, p.
422; Ballarin 1994–95, pp.
105, 347–48; Faietti 1994,
pp. 32–33; Moscow,
Pushkin Museum 1995,
pp. 94–95

This landscape picture, although ostensibly religious in content, comes close to what Paolo Giovio defined as a *parergon*, or accessory work meant to delight, since the view of countryside has been expanded to fill the entire field.¹ Within the landscape appear a number of chronologically unrelated saints enacting scenes from their lives or martyrdoms. Thus, Saint Francis receiving the stigmata may be discerned at the top left; below him, Saint Jerome adores the crucifix in his hermitage; and at the center, Saint Catherine is martyred on the wheel. Slightly to the right, wading through shallow water, is a hitherto unidentified woman holding a child, who is perhaps to be recognized as Saint Genevieve on the basis of the nearby woodland and the general wildness of her surroundings. A little farther up to the right, in the middle of the expanse of water, stands the tiny, distant figure of Saint Christopher; and in the right middle ground Saint George slays the dragon while the princess waves her arms in terror.

The placement of so anomalous a collection of saints in a picture without specific devotional purpose is justified and made credible by the unifying power of the landscape. Consistent with “the logic of dreams,”² the setting gives the various episodes the appearance of having been drawn from a single narrative. With its dramatic pictorial contrasts—between lights and darks, between the secret hollows in dense thickets and the wide open spaces, between the magical effects of atmospheric luminosity and the deepest shadows—this narrative conforms perfectly to the fantastic, irrational spirit of Ariosto’s great epic poem, *Orlando Furioso*. It brings to mind, for example, the experience of Rinaldo, wandering about in Scotland: “Many and strange adventures were to be encountered by one wandering through those woods, but . . . more often than not there was little talk of them, for the deeds, like the woods themselves, were shadowy” (iv:56).³ The artist sets before us a vast universal landscape as a natural setting for his romantic fantasy, showing saints engaged in their deeds, not as moral exemplars or as objects of devotion, but as inhabitants of the timeless world of the fairy tale.

The poetic force of this approach serves to distract us from what might otherwise be regarded as errors of drawing or composition. Thus, the

group of buildings surrounding the mill in the left foreground is clearly out of scale, being too small in relation to the weir in front, to Saint Jerome, and to the group of figures around Saint Catherine in the middle ground behind. And the sudden gusts of wind blow from at least three different directions. One, parallel to the picture plane, makes the standard of Saint Catherine’s executioners billow lazily to the left; however, the tunic of the soldier with the shield to one side swells diagonally into depth toward the right. Meanwhile, the wind directs the garments of the princess and the presumed Saint Genevieve in an opposite diagonal, toward the left.

One obvious conclusion to be drawn from such observations is that while Dosso was responsible for the overall conception, an assistant probably executed at least parts of the composition, including the landscape. Indeed, the foreground foliage is represented not with the loaded brush characteristic of Dosso but in a more careful, linear manner. The white buildings on the right and in the city in the middle of the lake are painted rather thinly, without Dosso’s energetic, unifying touch. The same painter was certainly also responsible for the execution (although not the design) of parts of the landscape of the Turin *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 36), the Parma *Saint Michael* (fig. 26), and *Hercules and the Pygmies* (cat. no. 40), and probably also, to judge from photographs, the *Immaculate Conception* destroyed in Dresden in 1945 (fig. 9). The same hand may also be detected in certain subordinate features of otherwise autograph pictures by Dosso, for instance, the trees above Saint Anne’s head in the Hampton Court *Holy Family* (cat. no. 37); therefore it may be the hand of Battista, contributing to the execution of pictures that are essentially the work of his elder brother and master. It should be noted that the foliage on the trees in the foreground of the *Landscape with Saints* is absolutely identical to that at the right in Battista’s *Battle of Orlando and Rodomonte* (cat. no. 50).

Nevertheless, the overall quality of the present picture remains very high, far superior to that of paintings Battista produced alone. When the little figures in this landscape are compared with the pygmies in the *Hercules*, which were certainly painted by the younger Dossi, it is immediately



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evident that the ones seen here have nothing to do with Battista. They are much closer to Dosso's own figures in *The Sicilian Games* and *Aeneas at the Entrance to the Elysian Fields* (cat. no. 24). The fact that the *Landscape*'s figure of Saint Jerome is exactly repeated in the Turin *Saint Jerome* further confirms Dosso's authorship of the former. The construction of the landscape is characteristic of Dosso's work of the mid- to late 1520s and finds close parallels in, for example, the *Saint Sebastian* painted for Cremona (fig. 8) and the Hampton Court *Holy Family*—or even, for all the differences of approach, the *Apollo* (cat. no. 28).

It was perceptively pointed out by Gombrich (1953) that the picture marks a crucial moment in the early history of landscape painting; it is also of great importance in Dosso's own development. We may understand the inclusion of the saints, along

with Turner (1966) and Gibbons (1968), as a mere pretext for the invention of pure landscape. But it is also true that this example, in which the human figures lose their predominance and become mere *parerga* of the landscape, is unique in Dosso's entire oeuvre. Dosso would have been well aware of the precedent that had been set by Giorgione's *Sunset Landscape* (National Gallery, London), in which the center of the composition is similarly empty of anything except air, land, and sky. Another important antecedent was Titian's fresco *The Jealous Husband* in the Scuola del Santo in Padua, where an effect of vast space is created by the contrast between the dark *repoussoir* of the tree-covered rock and the light, watery green of the distant meadows. Further, as has been rightly pointed out by virtually every scholar from Lasareff (1941) onward, Dosso must have been inspired by examples



Fig. 85. Joachim Patinir, *The Penitence of Saint Jerome*. Oil on wood (triptych). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1936 (36.14a–c)

of the northern painting so popular in Ferrara, represented perhaps not so much by Dürer and Altdorfer as by Joachim Patinir, the pioneer in creating broad panoramas of this type (fig. 85). Ballarin (in Paris 1993) went so far as to speak of a Dosso landscape “done exactly in the Flemish manner.” A final source of inspiration for Dosso’s landscape, and in particular for the display of vast expanses of water and coastline that turn to blue-violet in the distance, may be discerned in the landscape backgrounds painted by Giulio Romano in the Sala di Psiche of the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, datable to 1526–28. This influence was to become even more apparent in Dosso’s frescoes of 1530 at the Villa Imperiale, Pesaro (fig. 31).

These considerations are obviously extremely relevant for the dating of the picture. Mezzetti (1965a), followed by Gibbons (1968), dated it about 1535, by analogy with the supposedly very similar landscape in the Parma *Saint Michael* (fig. 26). Lasareff (1941) dated it to the teens, a period in which he also placed works as diverse as the pictures in Washington (cat. no. 3) and New York (cat. no. 10) and the *Hercules and the Pygmies* (cat. no. 40). Francis (1950) inclined toward the later 1530s, close to the *Saint Michael* and *Saint George* of 1540 (cat. no. 43). Ballarin (in Paris 1993), followed by Faietti (1994), first suggested a date of

1529–30 and then (1994–95) pushed it back slightly, to 1528. Strong support for this last opinion is provided by Mezzetti’s observation that the pose of Saint Jerome on the left is exactly that of the *Saint Jerome* in Turin (cat. no. 36). Both are variants on the pose of the same saint in the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece (fig. 9); and, according to a document recently published by Claudia Cremonini,⁴ this work was commissioned from Dosso (despite the fact that it was Battista who went to Modena to sign the contract in his brother’s name) in January 1527, with the stipulation that the picture was to be completed by the feast of the Assumption (August 15) of the same year. Even though the installation of the still-incomplete altarpiece did not in fact take place until 1532, there remain good external reasons for supposing that it was virtually ready by 1528. Although the background of the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece is seen from a much lower viewpoint, the treatment of its vegetation is very close to that in the Moscow *Landscape*; also consistent with Ballarin’s suggested dating of the latter to 1528 (or perhaps a year earlier) is the resemblance of both works to Giulio Romano’s Mantuan frescoes of 1526–28. Indeed, the *Landscape* shows no sign yet of the interest in large-scale, dominant foreground figures that Dosso was to develop in the 1530s from a beginning in the Della Sale altarpiece of 1527 (fig. 76).

The painting has probably been in Russia since at least the first half of the nineteenth century. In the Pushkin Museum, which it entered described as the work of an unknown painter, it was discovered by Lasareff, who first in a publication in Russian (1939) and then in a much more widely circulated article in English (1941) rightly recognized its painter as Dosso. With the single exception of Arslan (1957), who, while conceding the picture’s Dossoseque character, wondered whether it was perhaps an early work by Mastelletta (1575–1655), all critics have accepted Lasareff’s attribution to Dosso.

Although slightly trimmed at the edges, the painting has survived in generally good condition. Minor losses are visible, particularly in the sky at the top right (where a small tear may also be discerned) and in the lower right corner. Nevertheless, by means of a varnish, a speckled effect is created on the slopes of the mountain and an effect is achieved of extraordinary depth and spaciousness.

ML

1. It is striking how closely Paolo Giovio's passage on Dosso evokes the character of the picture: "Amoena namque picturae diverticula voluptuario labore consetatus, praeruptas cautes, vivrentia nemora, opacas perfluentium ripas, florentes rei rusticæ apparatus, . . . praeterea longissimos terrarum marisque prospectus" (For devoting himself with relish to the pleasant diversions of painting he used to depict jagged rocks, green groves, the firm banks of traversing rivers, the flourishing work of the countryside, the gay and hard toil of the

peasants, and also the far distant prospects of land and sea). Quoted in Gombrich 1953, p. 346 (1966 ed., pp. 113–14); see also Meregazzi 1972, p. 232. It was not by chance that Gombrich chose the *Landscape with Saints* to illustrate this passage from Giovio.

2. Turner 1966, p. 136.

3. Translation in Ariosto 1974, p. 36.

4. Cremonini 1997, pp. 254–55.

5. Information on provenance from Antonova in Moscow, Pushkin Museum 1995, p. 13.



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35. *Saint John the Baptist*

This newly found and previously unpublished picture is a notable addition to the corpus of Dosso's works. It is possible that it is a fragment of a larger canvas but more probable that it was conceived as a self-sufficient, bust-length image of the saint, like the only slightly larger depiction of him of about 1513–14 in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence (fig. 66), and its companion, *Saint George* (cat. no. 8). In this new picture, the Baptist is again shown with a gaze of expressive intensity and with his mouth half open, as if on the verge of speech or

prophecy; but the effect here is austere, and the painting lacks the rich brushwork, range of color, and poetically evocative landscape setting of the earlier pair. In the dominance of the emerald-green drapery and the chiseled quality of the features, the work is comparable to *Saint Sebastian* of about 1526–27 (fig. 8); and the physiognomical resemblance between the saint and Pan in the *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38), accompanied by a similarly broad sweep of cloak, confirms a dating to the late 1520s or early 1530s. PH

Ca. 1527–32
Oil on canvas, 24 3/8 x 20 1/2 in. (62 x 52 cm)
Private collection, Italy

36. Saint Jerome

*Ca. 1528
Oil on canvas, 37 3/4 × 48 1/4 in. (96 × 122.5 cm)
Private collection, Turin*

Provenance
Private collection,
England; Count Leonardo
Vitetti, Rome (from
1963); sale, Sotheby's,
Florence (September 29,
1983, no. 211)⁷

References
Longhi 1963, pp. 58–60;
Mezzetti 1965a,
pp. 115–16; Berenson
1968, p. 113; Gibbons
1968, pp. 131–32, 208–9;
Ballarin in Paris 1993,
p. 422; Ballarin 1994–95,
p. 105, pp. 348

A relatively recent subject in the scholarly literature, this picture was published as a masterpiece of Dosso's by Roberto Longhi in 1963, when it was in the collection of Count Leonardo Vitetti in Rome. The attribution to Dosso was apparently first made by Federico Zeri, who saw the picture in England before it reached the Vitetti collection; it has never subsequently been doubted. Despite slight overall abrasion caused by over-cleaning, the picture remains in good condition.

Longhi drew attention to the skeletal thinness of the figure of Saint Jerome and to the Ribera-like rendering of his withered skin. In Longhi's view, this reflected Dosso's contact with early Central Italian Mannerism, especially the idiosyncratic experiments of Rosso Fiorentino in his *Allegory of Death* drawing of 1517 and in the figure of Saint Jerome in his 1518 altarpiece from the church of the Ognissanti (both, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence). Ballarin (in Paris 1993) interpreted the picture as belonging instead to a Raphaelesque phase of Dosso's career, during which the painter (as has been noted) experienced the particular power of Raphael's most talented pupil, Giulio Romano, who arrived in Mantua in 1524. According to Ballarin, this period began about 1527 with the Della Sale altarpiece (fig. 76) and ended in 1530 with the decoration of the Sala delle Cariatidi at the Villa Imperiale in Pesaro; Ballarin accordingly dated the *Saint Jerome* to 1529–30 (in Paris 1993), subsequently (1994–95) amending the date to about 1528.

Longhi had placed the picture slightly earlier, about 1525. Mezzetti (1965a), however, dated it in the 1530s, close to the two documented altarpieces of 1533–34 (see fig. 26) as well as to the *Immaculate Conception* (fig. 9), then thought to date from 1532;¹ the Capitoline *Holy Family* (cat. no. 33); and the Getty *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38), which she believed postdated Titian's *Venus of Urbino* of 1538 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence). The only scholar to admit any unease over "certain unusual traits" of the painting, particularly its frail, elongated, filament-like figure, was Gibbons (1968); but his doubts about the work's authorship were dispelled when he saw the picture in the original and could take account of the delicacy of its execution, the fantastic dreamlike quality of its landscape, and its strong unity of expression throughout. Gibbons

too dated the work to the late 1520s, close to the Della Sale altarpiece installed in 1527.

The composition is unquestionably quite different from anything conceived by Dosso in the earlier part of the decade. The figure is smaller now in relation to the field, and the painter has invented an unusual bipartite composition structured around the supports of the wooden hut at the center. In the right half of the picture, the foreground figure of the old hermit² stands out against a powerful area of dark, while the left half is dominated by the bright landscape, above which floats a large white cloud. Jerome seems enclosed in a space defined by a diagonal running from the bottom right corner up through the skull, the saint's feet, and the step; it is intersected by the opposite thrust of his extended right arm holding up the crucifix, heightening the dynamism of his pose. On the right side of the painting the forms are delineated with an almost Flemish optical precision, while on the left everything becomes blurred in the pervasive atmosphere of the distant landscape. The division between these two radically different types of treatment is marked by the large central tree, whose foliage is carefully painted leaf by leaf. Longhi described it as a pomegranate with scarlet flowers, but in fact it is a pear tree, its small mature fruit clearly visible in the upper branches. Although the pear sometimes symbolizes the love between the Virgin and Christ,³ it is unlikely to carry so specific a meaning in the present context.

While the picture retains a characteristically Dossesque aura of romance and vivid naturalism, its brilliantly calculated contrasts of areas of color and of forms (as with the saint's limbs, arranged in emphatic contrapposto) are entirely in accord with the aesthetic ideal of the Central Italian *maniera moderna*.⁴ Although Longhi explained Dosso's shift in this direction by referring to his trip to Florence on ducal business in 1517, Ballarin's stress on the painter's growing Raphaelesque, begun in Rome but nourished by contact with Giulio Romano in the mid-1520s, is more convincing. Thus, influential models for both the saint's pose and the treatment of the landscape can be found in the decorations of the Villa Farnesina and the Vatican Logge, which date from the probable time of direct contact between Raphael and Dosso; but both figural and landscape styles



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were clearly brought up to date under the influence of Giulio's most recent work in Mantua (for example, fig. 10).⁵

Dosso had already experimented with a similar pose of the torso and arm (in the reverse direction) many years earlier, in the Vienna *Saint Jerome* of about 1518–19 (cat. no. 20). But the present picture does not resemble its predecessor; the forms are idealized, and there is no longer any reference to Venetian painting. Consistent with this transformation is the change in Dosso's technique. Whereas in the Vienna picture the pigment was applied thickly and vigorously, here it is thinner and smoother, becoming a fine veil. The delicate touch that created the precise linear leaves of the tree⁶ and the supports of the hut may be attributed to another artist, one who was also

responsible for part of the landscape in the Moscow *Landscape with Saints* (cat. no. 34), where he was similarly following a scheme laid out by Dosso. The summary treatment of the crucifix, as well, lends support to the attribution of these subordinate elements to Battista. But the powerful free design of the blue cloth draped over the saint's lap, and the nervous wriggle of folds in the red cloak, have close points of contact to *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue*, the *Sibyl*, the Hampton Court *Holy Family*, the Della Sale altarpiece, and the *Immaculate Conception*, commissioned in 1527 (cat. nos. 27, 31, 37; figs. 76, 9). Therefore, Ballarin was certainly correct to regard the picture as an almost entirely autograph work by Dosso dating from about 1528.

ML

1. Prior to the recent discovery of a contract for it dated 1527; Cremonini 1997, pp. 254–55.
2. Longhi 1963, p. 58, emphasized Dosso's casual attitude toward iconography by pointing out that Saint Jerome abandoned his eremitical life before reaching the age of forty, and could not, therefore, have been the old man Dosso portrays.
3. Levi D'Ancona 1977, pp. 296–99.
4. A completely convincing analysis of the fundamental characteristics of this stage of Dosso's career is provided by Ballarin in Paris 1993.
5. Ballarin (in Paris 1993) drew a further interesting parallel with Pordenone's *Dispute on the Immaculate Conception* (Capodimonte, Naples). There is probably no direct connection between the two works, however, especially since matters of internal chronology argue against Ballarin's dating of Pordenone's picture to about 1525.
6. This is perhaps one of the “unusual traits” of the picture that made Gibbons 1968, p. 131, initially uneasy about the attribution to Dosso.
7. Information on provenance kindly provided by the present owner.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is good, although somewhat worn. The canvas thread count is 17 to 21 per centimeter vertically and 19 to 20 per centimeter horizontally. There are no signs of the old strainer except at the top, 2.5 centimeters from the edge. A dark preparation is used under most of the painting with the exception of the saint's body, which is on a light preparation. The dark areas of red lake on the cloak are painted over a dark gray preparation, while the lighter areas are over an off-white substrate. The blue cloth is painted on the same white substrate. The trees and buildings in the background, which are well preserved, are on a blue preparation. Fingernails and toenails are very carefully painted, as are the detailed pebbles in the foreground; also noteworthy are the distinct whiskers of the lion. The crisp white foam of the splattering water under the bridge on the left (see fig. 38) might be painted with an emulsion of egg tempera and oil.

37. *Holy Family*

Ca. 1528–29
Oil on canvas, 66 5/8 ×
68 in. (169.2 × 172.8 cm)
Lent by Her Majesty
Queen Elizabeth II

Provenance
 Probably Palazzo Ducale, Mantua (by 1602);² Duke Vincenzo II Gonzaga, Mantua (1627 inv. no. 610); Charles I, Whitehall, London (1627–49);³ sale, London (1649); Proctor, London (from 1649); Charles II of England, London (by 1666–67, and in subsequent inventories of the Royal Collection)⁴

In some respects this magical, poetic picture represents a reworking of Dosso's sylvan Holy Family paintings of the teens. As in the Uffizi *Rest on the Flight* of about 1516 (cat. no. 14), for example, the figure group is based on a descending diagonal and is set against dark foliage in the middle ground that opens up on one side to offer an enticing glimpse of distant landscape. But the much larger dimensions of the present work are matched by the correspondingly monumental conception of its figures and by the classicizing ambition that locks together the complex poses of the Virgin, the Child, and Saint Anne into a central pyramid. These qualities and, even more, the powerful contrasts of light and shade, evidently inspired by the art of Giulio Romano, have led the picture to be seen as a work relatively late in Dosso's career. Thus, following Mendelsohn (1914), Gibbons (1968) and Freedberg (1971) both placed it in the mid-1530s, considering it only slightly earlier than the *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42), which is also characterized by bright highlighted areas emerging

from nocturnal shadows. More convincingly, Shearman (1983) and Ballarin (in Paris 1993) dated the *Holy Family* somewhat earlier, close to the already strongly Giuliesque *Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Bartholomew* (the Della Sale altarpiece; fig. 76), completed in 1527, which also contains a stormy sky and a spectrally lit landscape.

Yet compared with the altarpiece (admittedly badly damaged), the *Holy Family* displays a greater elegance of figure type and a self-conscious refinement in the handling of paint. The latter may in part reflect Dosso's response to the arrival of Parmigianino in nearby Bologna following the sacking of Rome in May 1527. Like the *Music* painted for the ceiling of Duke Alfonso's bedroom (cat. no. 26f), this work features an elaborate coiffure that is particularly Parmigianinesque, as is the use of rhythmical linear highlights on the Virgin's dress and hair; indeed, in the first known mention of the *Holy Family*, dating from 1602, the painting is attributed to Parmigianino.¹ It may accordingly be dated slightly later than 1527,



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perhaps to about 1528–29, making it exactly contemporaneous with the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece (fig. 9); Saint Gregory's vestments in that painting may be compared for textural richness with the Virgin's brocade cloak here. Although, as Shearman rightly observed, the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece is more normative in style than the *Holy Family*, this greater conventionality is perhaps more a function of scale and purpose than of chronology. The altarpiece was a very large work, destined for a public setting and probably

executed with extensive workshop assistance, while the *Holy Family*, with its witty eccentricities of expression and a calculated aestheticism in its handling of paint, was evidently made for the private enjoyment of a discriminating courtly patron. The possibility that Battista played a minor role in the execution of the landscape cannot be excluded, in particular regarding the foliage above Saint Anne's head, which is treated more carefully and regularly than the vividly evoked pair of saplings to the right.

References
Delices 1785, p. 10;
Jameson 1842, vol. 2,
p. 316; Waagen 1854,
vol. 2, pp. 359, 469; Logan
1894, p. 38; Benson in
London 1894, pp. xxxi,
52; Phillips 1896, p. 104;
Berenson 1907, p. 209;
Gardner 1911, p. 154;
Zwanziger 1911,
pp. 58–59; L. Venturi 1913,

p. 194; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 112–14; A. Venturi 1928, p. 964; Baker 1929, p. 34; Berenson 1932, p. 174; Baldass 1961, p. 83; Puppi 1964, pp. 20, 29; Gibbons 1965, p. 496; Grossmann in Manchester 1965, p. 30; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 35, 90; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 104–7, 180–81; Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed., p. 321); Shearman 1983, pp. 87–89; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 421; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 104–5; 344–45; Del Bravo 1994, p. 78; Romani 1996, pp. 102–3

The identities of the three saints and the significance of the cockerel held by the Christ child have given rise to some discussion. In a Mantua inventory of 1627 the two male saints to the left were interpreted as Peter and Paul, presumably because their beards are, respectively, short and white, and long and dark. Gibbons (1965, 1968) accepted this identification and accordingly interpreted the cockerel as an attribute of Peter, a reference to his triple denial of Christ on the eve of the Crucifixion. But, as Shearman pointed out, the foremost of the two male saints does not wear the blue and yellow garments canonical for Peter, but rather red and orange; and these, in fact, are the colors in which Dosso clothed Joseph in the *Rest on the Flight* and in numerous other Holy Family pictures (cf. cat. nos. 14, 17, 51). If Joseph is depicted here, then the picture represents an extended Holy Family, and the cockerel, associated with the dawning of a new day, must allude to Christ's Resurrection. As observed by Shearman, Dosso's picture thus belongs to a tradition, inaugurated by Leonardo and developed by Raphael, in which animals like lambs and cats were included in Holy Family pictures, partly for symbolic reasons, partly to unite the figures in a shared action and response. But Shearman may be incorrect to identify the elderly woman as the Virgin's sister Elizabeth and Joseph's companion as her husband Zachariah, since, as he admits, in that case one would expect the child Baptist, their son, to be included. It is more likely, therefore, that the female saint is the Virgin's mother, Anne (as Gibbons assumed), and that the saint behind Joseph is, despite the blackness of his beard, the Virgin's father, Joachim.

The picture was first recorded in the early seventeenth century in the ducal collection in Mantua, and this fact strongly suggests that it was originally painted for a member of the Mantuan ruling house: either Isabella d'Este, elder sister of Alfonso d'Este (as proposed in Puppi 1964), or her son, Federico II Gonzaga, marchese and later duke of Mantua. Isabella would have known Dosso from the time of his service to her husband Francesco II in 1512 (see cat. no. 3), and there is good evidence to suppose that the painter's later *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41) was painted for her. On the other hand, during the 1520s and 1530s Federico was more active than his mother as a patron of art; and evidence of his taste for pictures of this type is pro-

vided by another informal representation of the Virgin and Child accompanied by saints and a symbolic animal in a landscape, Titian's *Madonna of the Rabbit* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), painted for him in 1530. Moreover, a commission from Federico might have particularly stimulated Dosso to paint the *Holy Family* in a style close to that of Federico's own court painter, Giulio Romano.

The picture's likely destination for Mantua, its dating to the later 1520s, and the identification of the principal male saint as Joseph rather than Peter are factors that, taken together, fully justify Shearman's skepticism toward the theory elaborated by Gibbons (1965, 1968). Gibbons had proposed that the male saints signify reconciliation within the church, the presence of Paul refers to the election of Pope Paul III in 1534, and the lilies in the foreground and the floral motifs on the Virgin's cloak (which he interpreted as fleurs-de-lis) allude to the French princess Renée, wife of Ercole II and duchess of Ferrara from 1534, and to a hope for a reconciliation between the Protestantism to which she inclined and the Catholic Church. In demolishing this rather forced argument, Shearman additionally pointed out that the flowers on the Virgin's cloak are not fleurs-de-lis, and, as Gibbons himself was aware, the lilies in the foreground are perfectly explicable as traditional symbols of the purity of the Virgin. According to an alternative interpretation proposed by Del Bravo (1994), the picture is meant as a moralizing sermon on the virtue of faith and offers a pointed contrast between Peter's willingness to deny Christ and Elizabeth's joyful acceptance that her child was a gift from God (Luke 1:45). But obviously this interpretation too is precluded if the corresponding two saints represent Joseph and Anne.

Comparison of the present dimensions with those given in Van der Doort's catalogue of the collection of Charles I, compiled about 1637–39, shows that the canvas's width has been reduced by some 15 centimeters, probably (as Shearman says) on the right, where Anne's legs are truncated. Shearman also notes a number of characteristically Dossesque pentimenti, visible even to the naked eye: the Virgin originally wore a more ample drapery, the position of her head has been shifted slightly to the right, and Anne's head and that of the Child were originally placed slightly lower.

PH

1. See n. 2.

2. As suggested in Shearman 1983, the picture is almost certainly identical with one attributed to Parmigianino that was copied in 1602 by Bernardino Malpizzi, "una madonna del Parmegiano dove è il N.S. che à un gallo legato in bratio" (a madonna by Parmigianino in which Our Lord clasps a cockerel in his arms). It is listed without an attribution in the Mantuan inventory of 1627, no. 610: "Un quadro grande dipintovi la Madonna, il putino che scherza con un gallo et S. Pietro et S. Paolo" (A large picture representing the Madonna, the Child playing with a cockerel, and Saints Peter and Paul). See Luzio 1913, pp. 282, 130, 152.
3. Recorded in Van der Doort's catalogue of ca. 1637–39: "A Mantua preece Done by Dorsee.... A great preece of our Ladie, and Christ playing with a Cock in his armes and an Joseph and other Saint Standing by in a Landskipp." See Millar 1960, pp. 49, no. 42, 205.
4. For further information on the provenance, see Shearman 1983.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting's condition is good, although the red-rose garment and orange drape of Saint Joseph are quite worn and have lost most of their red lake glazing. There is a dark gray preparation beneath most of the painting; at the bottom, areas of black are visible under the paint layer. Many of the shadows in the flesh tones are achieved by nearly transparent layers over the gray imprimatura. A layer of red lake on the sleeve of one of the saints is painted over a white substrate, and areas of a green pentimento painted over a yellow substrate come out from under the Virgin Mary's cloak on the lower left. The ribbon and the brooch in her hair, with its highlights, are painted in sharp relief. Some figures have detailed hair, beards, eyebrows, eyelashes, and a red dot in the corner of the eye. Changes made to the head of Saint Anne are visible on the surface: the head was moved farther to the right and a different headdress was painted with jagged, thick brushstrokes.

38. *Allegory with Pan*

With a sleeping nude woman prominently displayed, an equally opulent presentation of flowers and fruits, and a shimmering background landscape that cradles a Gothic city at the meeting of mountains and sea, this is one of the most sensuously beautiful of all Dosso's pictures. It is also one of the most difficult to interpret; of the four figures, only Pan, with his goat's horns and legs and reed pipe, is clearly recognizable. Since Pan was famously libidinous, it is generally assumed that the sleeping nude is one of the various nymphs he pursued, usually without success. Consistent with the erotic theme is the presence of flying cupids, some of whom brandish their bows while others shoot arrows in the general direction of the figure group. Much harder to determine are the identities of the other two women, the older of whom appears to be protecting the nude as she sleeps. Equally unclear is the significance of the various objects: the luxurious lapis lazuli pitcher on the ground to the right

with its base and neck of gilded bronze; the musical part books beside it; the flowers; the huge lemons. Nor is there any early mention that would help elucidate the picture's meaning. Indeed, nothing is known of its history before it surfaced in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Then the picture was known as *Jupiter and Antiope*; later, with more justification, it was called *Vertumnus and Pomona*. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pomona was a nymph who cultivated fruit trees and was ogled by Pans and satyrs but was finally won by the rustic god Vertumnus in the guise of an old woman (xiv:622–60). But that passage does not account for the presence of the female figure in red and green, nor for the depiction of the presumed Pomona as a sleeping nude, nor for the music. Taking his cue from the music book, Gibbons (1968) suggested that the nude was instead Echo, musically the most gifted of Pan's loves; he identified the protective old woman as Terra, or Mother Earth, and her younger

Ca. 1529–32
Oil on canvas, 64½ ×
57¼ in. (163.8 ×
145.4 cm)
The J. Paul Getty
Museum, Los Angeles
83.PA.15

Provenance
Probably Robert P.
Nichols, London (by
1859);⁵ 4th marquess of
Northampton, London
and Castle Ashby (by
1894);⁶ by descent to
Spencer Douglas David,
the 7th marquess of
Northampton, Castle
Ashby (1978–83); The
J. Paul Getty Museum
(from 1983)



Fig. 86. X-radiograph of *Allegory with Pan* showing numerous changes of details and composition

References

- Benson in London 1894, pp. xxx, 18–19; Berenson 1907, p. 81; Gardner 1911, pp. 150, 160; L. Venturi 1913, pp. 195–96; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 140–42; Phillips 1915, p. 133; A. Venturi 1928, pp. 961, 975; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, pp. 160–61; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 86); Bodmer 1943, p. xxxix; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 45–46, 76; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 111; Gibbons 1968, pp. 86–89, 120, 170; Calvesi 1969b, pp. 168, 170–71, 173; Gentili 1980 (1988 ed., pp. 122–25); Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87,

companion more tentatively as Diana or perhaps the nymph Lyda. But Gibbons had to draw on an implausibly large number of literary sources to assemble these interpretations, and in their subsequent publications both Calvesi (1969b) and Gentili (1980) returned to the *Metamorphoses* as a basic source. For Calvesi the nymph is Canens, the sweet singer who, hearing of her husband's death, laid herself down to die of grief beside the river Tiber (xiv:332–434), and the old woman is not Terra but Time. Gentili identified the story as that of Pan and Syrinx (i:689–712), in which the nymph Syrinx escaped from her pursuer by being transformed into reeds beside the river Ladon. The reed pan pipes and the reference to music are fitting details for an illustration of this episode; moreover, Bayer (1998) observed that certain aspects of the painting's composition—most notably the way Pan watches the nymph from behind a tree—apparently derive from the *Pan and Syrinx* engraving by Marco Dente.

Gentili made a serious attempt to account for figures and details not mentioned by Ovid by referring to the allegorical interpretation of the myth in Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'Amore*, which was first published in 1535 but had already been in circulation much earlier. In Gentili's reading, the pitcher, music, flowers, fruits, and sleeping pose all symbolize *voluptas*, or the voluptuous love between Pan and Syrinx; the old woman represents the passing of carnal desire with time; and the younger woman, in her protective armor, stands for the careful control of the senses by virtue and reason. A similar but more purely allegorical interpretation, based on the treatise *De Natura de Amore* by the Mantuan court humanist Mario Equicola (published 1525), was proposed by Del Bravo (1994). According to Del Bravo, the nude stands for innocent Nature, the old woman for Philosophy, the woman in armor for Virtue, and the lascivious faun (not Pan in person) for Vice; the overall message of the picture is that the virtuous life consists of a harmonious balance between the soul and body, with the pleasures of the senses not being permitted to dominate.

All these interpretations must to a greater or lesser extent be revised in light of the detailed technical investigation that accompanied conservation work undertaken between 1983 and 1986. In the first place, x-ray photographs of the picture revealed that numerous details had been changed or suppressed during the course of its execution (fig. 86). Some of these alterations were purely formal in character: for example, the old woman's left hand was originally extended, not raised; Pan's pipes were placed farther back; the flying putti were represented full-length. But other changes are likely to have been of iconographic significance. Thus, a man holding a mandolin was originally represented in the left middle ground; a sword and suit of chain mail were hanging from the tree; and the female figure in the red cloak supported with her now-obliterated left hand a large bass viola da gamba, while her right hand was positioned to hold the bow. Cleaning of the picture and investigation of the paint layers have revealed even more radical changes than those evident from the x-rays. Most importantly, it became evident that the female figure in the red cloak had been painted over with a landscape by Dosso himself; then, in the nineteenth century, probably because by that time the figure beneath had become clearly visible through the landscape,



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a restorer must have decided to remove the landscape and retouch the figure. The fact also emerged that Pan, whose head is painted over a lemon on the tree, was an addition to the original composition; so too is the blue pitcher, which is painted over pebbles and grass. In other words, the

armored female figure was in one version (fig. 87) and Pan in another version (fig. 88), but the two were never meant to appear in the same picture. A final change observed is that the sleeping nude's hairstyle originally resembled that of the standing female and was adorned with a laurel crown.



Fig. 87. Computer-enhanced image showing composition as first completed by Dosso



Fig. 88. Computer-enhanced image showing final composition by Dosso before the nineteenth-century restoration

p. 121; Slim 1990, p. 43; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 420, 422; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 101–3, 106, 348; Del Bravo 1994, p. 75; Romani 1996, p. 103; Bayer 1998; Ciammitti 1998; Fredericksen 1998; Humfrey 1998b

Thus, as Ballarin (in Paris 1993) pointed out, the picture in its original form bore a closer resemblance than it does now to the related work in the Galleria Borghese (cat. no. 39). In that probably later version, whose subject is equally mysterious, there are only three figures: the sleeping nymph, wearing a laurel crown; the old woman; and the commanding female figure in green and red. The Getty picture has clearly been cut back at least twenty centimeters at the left; originally there must have been a wider landscape area, corresponding to that on the left side of the Borghese picture, and perhaps also a river sweeping around behind the figure group, with the edge of the river bank visible in the immediate foreground.

However, in the only detailed iconographical study of the *Allegory with Pan* undertaken since its cleaning, Ciammitti (1998) maintained that the female figure in the red cloak and the formal similarities to the Borghese picture should be regarded as irrelevant to the interpretation of the Getty picture in its final form as painted by Dosso—the picture that he intended to be seen. Developing a suggestion advanced but then discarded by Gibbons (1968), Ciammitti proposed that the picture portrays the story of the nymph Nicaea as

recounted in the *Dionysiaca* by the fifth-century A.D. poet Nonnus of Panopolis. A follower of Artemis (or, Diana), Nicaea was sworn to virginity and in self-defense killed her would-be lover Hymnus. The indignant Eros (Cupid) then enflamed Dionysus (Bacchus) with love for her, and Dionysus, in order to capture her, transformed into wine the water of a spring where she was accustomed to drink. But, despite a nuptial bed of fragrant flowers, and nuptial music played for the couple by a jealous Pan, the unhappy nymph never became resigned to her fate. After giving birth to a daughter, she committed suicide. According to Ciammitti's reading, therefore, Nicaea is shown in drunken sleep in an amorous bower of flowers and fruits; the cupids inspire men and gods (unseen) with love for her; the frustrated Pan admires her from outside the bower; and the distant city is Nicaea in Asia Minor, founded by Dionysus in honor of his bride. Ciammitti identifies the old woman as Melia, daughter of Oceanus, who emerged from a tree to mock Dionysus, and interprets her gesture not as protective but as funerary, foretelling the nymph's untimely end. To support her naming of the *Dionysiaca* as the text for Dosso's picture,

Ciammitti demonstrates that the poem was indeed circulating in manuscript form in the early decades of the sixteenth century and points to a recent suggestion that the central episode of Lorenzo Costa's *Reign of Comus* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), painted about 1510–15 for the *studio* of Isabella d'Este in the ducal palace in Mantua, also depicts the story of Nicaea. One difficulty with Ciammitti's reading, however, is that the standing female is regarded as entirely irrelevant to the significance of the picture, whereas the figure, although indeed overpainted by Dosso, originally did coexist with the nude and the old woman. Another difficulty is that the central character of Dionysus, who should be holding Nicaea in his arms, is not represented (as he is in Costa's picture); but Ciammitti ingeniously interprets the pitcher of wine as a symbol of his invisible presence. Certainly a Dionysiac reading of the picture is consistent with the special interest Duke Alfonso took in Bacchus, evidenced by the Bacchanalian subjects of the principal decoration of his Camerino.

A more conclusive result of the recent conservation is a clear enough view of the painting to make an old theory that Battista played a major collaborative role—still held by Mezzetti (1965a)—no longer sustainable. While Battista probably was responsible for much of the landscape background in closely contemporary works such as the *Landscape with Saints*, the Turin *Saint Jerome*, and the Borghese *Mythological Allegory* (cat. nos. 34, 36, 39), none of those has the complete unity of design and execution found in the present picture. Indeed, the stylistic contrast between this distant vista and that in the Borghese variant may be taken as paradigmatic of the two brothers' different approaches toward landscape painting.

Mezzetti also thought that the *Allegory with Pan* was a very late work, postdating Titian's *Venus of Urbino* of 1538 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence); but there is no necessary relationship between the two pictures. Dosso's nymph may be seen as deriving instead from earlier Venetian reclining nudes, including the one in the right foreground of Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians* painted for Duke Alfonso's Camerino (fig. 22) and Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), both of which show the figure asleep in a landscape. Gibbons (1968) dated the *Allegory with Pan* to the very beginning of the 1520s, contrasting its "over-

ly regularized and miniature facial features" with the "more plastic and aggressively drawn anatomies" of the Modena altarpiece, installed in 1522 (fig. 1). But while Gibbons's observation of the differences between the two works is accurate, his conclusion that the *Allegory with Pan* must be earlier than 1522 does not follow; and more recent critics, notably Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), have more plausibly seen the calculated refinement of the Getty picture and the precision of the still-life details in its foreground as representing a later stage of development. Ballarin connected this development to Dosso's growing awareness of artistic events at the court of Mantua in the later 1520s: the arrival there of mythological paintings by Correggio, such as the *Jupiter and Antiope* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), and especially the activity of the resident court painter, Giulio Romano. Certainly the pagan world evoked by Giulio in his frescoes in the Sala di Psiche of the Palazzo del Te (ca. 1526–28), a world of self-consciously elegant and plastically modeled nudes and the display of precious artifacts (fig. 10), seems to find a particular resonance in Dosso's picture, and no less relevant for Dosso in this period are the glistening surfaces of Giulio's easel paintings, such as the *Lovers* of about 1525 (Hermitage, Saint Petersburg).¹ Dosso's choice of a bird's-eye view for his distant landscape, so different from even the background of *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* of about 1523–24 (cat. no. 27), may also be indebted to Giulio's example.²

While Ballarin's dating of the final version of *Allegory with Pan* to about 1529 is generally convincing, the painting's stylistic proximity to such works as *Saint Michael* of 1534 (fig. 26) would allow for a slightly later dating as well. It also remains possible that the picture was begun considerably earlier and that the alterations, exceptionally radical even by Dosso's standards, were introduced over a period of several years. The figure in the red cloak, with her broad features and tightly combed-down hair, seems to belong to a slightly earlier phase of development than her companions; she more closely resembles the women in the *Conversation rhomboid* (cat. no. 26b) and *Saints Cosmas and Damian* (cat. no. 23), both of about 1521–22.

A number of tentative conclusions may be drawn from this survey of the art historical literature. The radical nature of the changes in composition and motif revealed by x-ray suggests that this painting, like classic works by Giorgione such

as the *Tempest* (fig. 3), was never intended to be the literal representation of any particular episode from classical mythology. Rather, the picture seems to have been inspired by a more general theme, perhaps loosely allegorical, for which ideas were freely drawn from a range of literary and visual sources. As with the canvases of Duke Alfonso's Camerino, a thematic program may have been drawn up by some court poet or humanist. It is difficult to know whether Dosso's various departures from the original program were made on his own initiative or under the continuing supervision of that literary adviser, but the underlying message of the picture is likely to have remained substantially unaffected by the changes.

Supporting the natural assumption that the *Allegory with Pan* was painted for Duke Alfonso is the fact that it shares many elements with one or more of the Camerino canvases: the fundamental theme, which is certainly erotic; the setting in an Arcadian landscape; the allusion to music, which remains important even after the elimination of the viola da gamba; the display of luscious fruits, comparable to that in Titian's *Worship of Venus* (fig. 21); the pitcher, which echoes similar vessels *all'antica* in Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* and in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* and *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (figs. 18, 20, 22). (It is worth noting that his biographer Paolo Giovio made particular mention of the duke's interest in earthenware vases and noted that he made them himself, to be copied by professional potters.)³ The nuptial references pointed out by Ciammitti combine with Ballarin's dating to the late 1520s to lend further weight to the unpublished suggestion of Peter Meller that the picture was commissioned to celebrate the marriage in 1528 between Alfonso's son and heir, the future Ercole II, and Princess Renée, daughter of King Louis XII of France.⁴ This hypothesis is weakened if the argument that the painting was begun some years earlier is accepted; but even in that case, it remains possible that the occasion of the dynastic marriage prompted Dosso to revise and complete an earlier painting commissioned by the duke.

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1. The old woman in this picture may also be seen as a source for Dosso's; see the telling visual comparison made by Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 1, pls. cxcv–vii.

2. Humfrey 1998b.

3. Giovio 1597, p. 16: "Faceva ancora qualche volta vasi bellissimi di terra, a uso di stouagliai, i quali studij gli furon dapo molto utili & molto a proposito" (He also

made very beautiful vases of clay for the use of potters, who found them of great help in their work).

4. Lecture at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, May 10, 1996.

5. As is pointed out in Fredericksen 1998, the picture is almost certainly identical with the *Jupiter and Antiope* by Dosso that Nichols lent to the British Institution in 1859.

6. Benson in London 1894, pp. 18–19.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is generally good, although there are areas of abrasion and vertical tears through the nude figure and the face of the old woman. A few large circular cracks appear in the paint film. The canvas thread count is 24 per centimeter in both directions. A vertical seam is butt-joined and covered with a fine strip of canvas. The top and bottom edges have been slightly cut: there is some cusping, but also tattered edges with remnants of paint. However, a section of at least 20 centimeters must be missing on the left, where only a fragment of the arm of a putto holding a bow remains from what must have been an entire figure. The x-radiograph also shows a figure of a man cut in half by the edge of the painting (now painted over).

Analysis of the dark gray preparation shows it to be lead white mixed with black particles. Areas such as the green dress are painted on a modeled substrate of lead white mixed with a copper green, while the red lake is painted over a mixture of lead white and vermilion. The sky is a mixture of lead white, azurite, and smalt. A substrate of lead white mixed with azurite lies beneath the landscape and the buildings. The green foliage is painted in a mixture of lead white, lead-tin yellow, and copper green, and is glazed with a green verdigris (basic copper acetate). In two samples taken, the medium was found to be linseed oil. Fingerprints were found on the green leaves of the lemon tree. The trees are painted over a very dark blue, which must have had a yellow glaze, now worn, to create the shaded areas.

The 1985 restoration and study revealed important information about the genesis of the painting. A nineteenth-century restorer in the service of the third marquess of Northampton, possibly Raffaello Pinti, seriously altered the original paint film. He removed parts of Dosso's landscape to reveal an earlier female figure with a red drape that

the artist had painted out, as well as a section of her viola da gamba. Most of the figure's instrument and her left hand remain covered by the trunk of the lemon tree. When the nineteenth-century overpaints were removed, small remnants of the original landscape became discernible all over the figure. The nineteenth-century restorer also removed part of the nude's flowing hair,

uncovering an earlier version crowned with a laurel wreath (similar to that in cat. no. 39). The figure of Pan, which was added later, is painted more loosely than the other figures, although Dosso still paid attention to the distinct hairs in the beard.

(Some information on the pigments is from the report by Frank Preusser, Getty Conservation Institute, 1983.)

39. *Mythological Allegory*, also called *The Transformation of Syrinx or Diana and Callisto*

This painting, with its mysterious iconography, has always been associated with the *Allegory with Pan* at the Getty Museum (cat. no. 38), with which it obviously shares the motif of a nude young woman and an old woman apparently keeping vigil over her. The assumption was that the two works probably tell the same tale and that their dates are identical. In terms of subject this picture has not yet been convincingly explained: defined by Manilli in 1650 as a "sleeping Venus with two standing nymphs," it is also recognizable, as Mezzetti (1965a) first suggested, as the work described in no. 339 of the 1693 Borghese collection inventory, "a large canvas painting with woods and villages, with three women, one of them on the ground with a crown of laurel on her head."¹ In the 1790 inventory it is called "the nymph Calisto, follower of Diana,"² the identification it carried throughout the nineteenth century until Mendelsohn (1914), following a tip she credits to Richard Föster, suggested it might represent the myth of Pandora. The only complete iconological analysis of the painting was made in 1968 by Gibbons: he proposed that the subject is the transformation of the nymph Syrinx into a reed to enable her to escape the god Pan. In this reading she is seen nude and asleep on the sandy banks of the Ladon River, where, according to Ovid's version of the myth (*Metamorphoses* 1:698–712), she begged for her transformation. The old woman near her in an attitude of protection is Earth; the standing woman, ready to open the vase with transformative potions inside, is Diana. This interpretation grew from a conviction of the painting's close relationship to the Getty

work (then at Castle Ashby) so strong that little attention was paid to the absence of the story's main actor, Pan. Gibbons regarded this lack as consistent with the general oddity of Ferrarese iconography, in which the overturning of usual expectations is the norm. Such an assertion, however, would seem to compromise the very meaning of iconographic research.

Moreover, this painting contains some new elements not in the Getty work, such as the three laurel crowns—one worn by the nude woman and two on the ground—which might refer to the god for whom that plant was sacred, Apollo. And the painting does not seem related to the birth of music, with which Gibbons associated the Getty picture. Nor, again because of the three crowns, is it possible to extend to this canvas the very new reading that Ciammitti (1998) has given the Getty painting, which she believes illustrates the myth of Nicaea. Also unconvincing is the interpretation put forth by Del Bravo (1994), according to which, as in his reading of the Getty *Allegory of Pan*, the nude young woman is Nature, the old woman Philosophy, and the standing woman Virtue, who elevates man's nature through philosophy if man proves capable. This conceit supposedly stems from the ideas expressed by Mario Equicola in his *De Natura de Amore* published in 1525; but it seems too much like an unwarranted mixture of unconnected symbolologies, and it still leaves the three laurel crowns unexplained. Such allegorical seriousness seems incompatible with the joyous materialism in which Equicola's book abounds, with Alfonso d'Este's scant scholarship, and with a culture

Ca. 1529–30
Oil on canvas, 52 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 64 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (134 x 163.5 cm)
Galleria Borghese,
Rome 304

Provenance
Villa Borghese, Rome
(by 1650); Giovan Battista
Borghese, Rome (1693
inv., no. 339); Palazzo
Borghese, Campo Marzio,
Rome (ca. 1790 inv., no.
26); Borghese Collection,
Rome (1833 legal inv.,
as by school of Garofalo)

References
Manilli 1650, p. 104;
Morelli 1890 (1892 ed.,
p. 215); A. Venturi 1893,
p. 154; Benson in London
1894, p. 51; Gruyer 1897,
vol. 2, p. 286; Berenson
1907, p. 210; L. Venturi
1909, pp. 33–35; Zwanziger
1911, pp. 64–65, 117;
L. Venturi 1913,
pp. 195–96; Mendelsohn
1914, pp. 137–40;
Cantalamessa 1922–23,
pp. 42–43; Longhi 1928
(1967 ed., p. 347);



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Fig. 89. X-radiograph showing: a female figure entering from the left, later eliminated; changes in the scale of the figure at the right; perhaps a crescent moon in the original composition; and indications that the old woman was probably added later

whose general tone was of entertainment above all. So tedious and banal an allegorization could hardly be at home in a court where the duke's *studio* was organized around the unqualified praise of wine and beautiful women.

Thus we have no sound iconographical interpretation of this painting, which, *faute de mieux*, continues to carry the alternate titles *Diana and Callisto* and *The Transformation of Syrinx*.

Recognized by Manilli (1650) as a work by the Dossi of Ferrara, the painting was cited in the 1693 and 1790 Borghese inventories as "by Dosi," only to be demoted in the early 1800s to "school of Garofalo."³ In 1890 Morelli proposed a reattribution to Dossi, but, almost immediately, Adolfo Venturi (1893) proposed Dossi's brother Battista as the artist (this view was later supported by Gruyer 1897). Berenson (1907) called the work a collaboration between the two brothers but principally by Battista, and later (1932, 1936, 1968) a

work executed entirely by Battista from a design by Dosso. Also favoring a collaboration between the two brothers were Mendelsohn (1914), Mezzetti (1965a), and Gibbons (1968); whereas Dosso's sole authorship has been embraced by Benson (in London 1894), Lionello Venturi (1909), Zwanziger (1911), Cantalamessa (1922–23), Longhi (1928, but in 1940 he supported the idea of a collaboration), Adolfo Venturi (1928, after changing his mind), Buscaroli (1935), Rinaldis (1948), Suida (1949), Della Pergola (1955), Puppi (1965), Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), and Coliva (1994).

Actually, while there can be no doubt that the splendid composition is entirely Dosso's—organized as it is by a kind of opposition between a bright half (the countryside, the sky, the distant city) and a dark half (the trees on the right), in a device already used in the Turin *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 36)—it is possible that Battista painted the buildings, which are similar to those in the Turin canvas and the *Landscape with Saints* in Moscow (cat. no. 34). The feathery boughs of the small trees on the left are identical to those in the distance in the Turin painting, and may also be attributed to Battista. In contrast, the execution of the leafy fronds in the group of large trees on the right, extremely high in quality and worthy of Dosso in all respects, is identical to that of the additions on the right of Giovanni Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* (fig. 18), which are believed to have been executed by Dosso in an initial revision of 1514–19 and then further retouched by Titian during his stay in Ferrara in 1529.⁴ In fact, the perfect stylistic similarity now makes one think that even Dosso's first revision was done about 1529 and then partially changed by Titian immediately afterward. That the Bellini work was in the artist's mind when he painted the present canvas is further demonstrated by the appearance of identical dapples of deep blue sky between the leafy boughs of the trees.

The face of the woman standing at the right seems modeled exactly (but in reverse) on the face in *Saint Catherine* in the Galleria Borghese—whether the latter is an original by Dosso or a copy by the Cavalier d'Arpino, as Anna Coliva has suggested.⁵

It was Puppi's idea (1965) that the robust, radiant form of the standing figure, not unlike a polished bronze statue, and the deep wrinkles of the old woman's face echo the "modern manner" taken up in Northern Italy, in particular the variant imported by Giulio Romano on his arrival in



39, detail

A. Venturi 1928, p. 958; Berenson 1932, p. 175; Buscaroli 1935, p. 215; Berenson 1936, p. 151; Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., p. 159); Rinaldis 1948, p. 83; Suida 1949, p. 284; Della Pergola 1955, pp. 31–32; Della Pergola 1964–65, p. 459; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 45, 47, 113; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, pp. 113, 115; Gibbons 1968, pp. 89–92, 132, 247; Calvesi 1969b, p. 168; Rome 1985, no. 5; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 420–22; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 101–7, 349; Coliva 1994, pp. 116, 118–19; Del Bravo 1994, p. 79

Mantua in 1524. As for the nude, it is one of the most tender and moving of Dosso's career. Therefore Puppi would move the painting—usually considered a fairly early work of Dosso's, datable between 1520 and 1530—to after 1524 or even very close to 1530, although not to the late 1530s, as Mezzetti (1965a), for example, would have it.

This view has been further developed by Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), who correctly sees the Getty and Borghese paintings as two key expressions of Dosso's adherence to the new manner of Giulio Romano as it was being defined above all by the Sala di Psiche frescoes in the Palazzo del Te, which were completed in 1528 (fig. 10). The many comparisons of details set forward by the scholar are, for this point, unarguable. Even the riverside setting and the overtly erotic emphasis of the nude figure can be attributed to Giulio's influence. Ballarin likewise pointed out the landscape style's dependence on, or at least great affinity to, works being produced by Titian around 1529, from the lost *Saint Peter Martyr* altarpiece in Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice to the *Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine* (ca. 1530) in the National Gallery in London. The style shows the influence of Flemish painting, whose presence was overwhelming at the time in Venice and probably also in Ferrara, demonstrated by the high rocks "à la Patinir" in the background. The very meticulous rendering of the group of trees in the distance to the left anticipates that in the *Saint Michael* in the Pinacoteca di Parma, a work of 1534 (fig. 26).

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1. "Un quadro grande in tela con Boschi e Paesini con Tre donne et una di dette donne in terra con una corona di laoro in testa." Della Pergola 1964–65, p. 459.

2. Della Pergola 1955, p. 31

3. Ibid.

4. Bull 1990, p. 43.

5. Coliva 1994, p. 123, and see her essay in this catalogue.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is good: there are records of restorations in 1936 and 1972. The canvas is a plain weave with 17 to 18 threads per centimeter vertically and 18 to 20 per centimeter horizontally. It consists of two pieces of canvas butt-joined horizontally in the center and reinforced with a strip of fine canvas that is visible to the eye. The imprint of the original strainer can be seen on the left about 4 centimeters in, suggesting a loss of about 2 centimeters, and on the right at about 6 centimeters in, suggesting that this edge is intact. The imprint of the original central horizontal reinforcement is also visible. The diagonal reinforcements at the corners are of equal length and width, making it unlikely that much canvas is missing at top or bottom.

There seems to be a very dark gray or brown preparation under the paint layer. The intense green tunic of the standing figure on the right (unfortunately not well preserved) is painted over a yellow substrate and shows some imprints. The same figure's red skirt is painted in a red glaze over a modeled white substrate. The flesh tones are painted directly over the dark gray or brown

preparation. The trees, painted in green over a dark blue substrate, seem to be among the best preserved elements of the painting, having retained most of what are probably copper resinate glazes, which now display the typical discoloration. (Because the painting has never suffered a strong cleaning, the dark blue preparation under the trees is not easily visible.)

The x-radiograph reveals extensive and important changes: A female figure originally included at the left was painted out, and the old woman may have been added at the end of the working process, as she seems painted over the landscape. Other pentimenti can be seen in the body of water on the left and in the background. Originally more sky was visible, as were parts of a crescent moon. Many changes were made to the figure at the far right: originally she was taller, her feet reaching almost to the bottom of the painting; she wore a billowing cloak; and her hair was arranged differently. Typical for Dosso are the detailed pebbles, similar to those in cat. no. 38, and the tufts of grass in the foreground.

(Some information drawn from the Condition Report by M. Cardinali, M. B. De Ruggieri, and C. Falcucci, EMMEBICI, Rome.)

40. *Hercules and the Pygmies*

Ca. 1535
Oil on canvas,
 $44\frac{7}{8} \times 57\frac{5}{8}$ in.
(114×146.5 cm)
Alte Galerie des
Steiermärkischen
Landesmuseums
Joanneum, Graz 4

The figure of Hercules was central to official Ferrarese iconography during the reign of Ercole I at the end of the fifteenth century, and it naturally regained something of its earlier importance with the accession to the dukedom of Ercole II, Alfonso's eldest son, in 1534. Battista was paid during the years 1542–45 for providing tapestry cartoons showing scenes from the life of Hercules,¹ and Dosso's enigmatic *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42) has the same principal figure. The subject of the present work, with its playful, mock-heroic depiction of the nude demigod surrounded by a phalanx of lilliputian soldiers, was also clearly chosen to honor Ercole d'Este. Indeed, as Suida (1949) observed, comparison with a portrait medal of 1546² suggests that the head of the

recumbent hero is an idealized portrait of the new duke, and that physiognomical resemblance is confirmed by a marble bust of Ercole II by Prospero Sogari (Galleria Estense, Modena). In representing a Renaissance prince as a mythological nude, the *Hercules* anticipates Bronzino's later portrayals of the grand duke Cosimo de' Medici as Orpheus and of Andrea Doria as Neptune.

It was first pointed out by Schlosser (1900) that this scene is based on the *Imagines* by Philostratus the Elder, a series of descriptions of the paintings in a house in third-century Naples. In one of these, according to Philostratus (II:22), Hercules, who had been sleeping after his conquest of the giant Antaeus, is attacked by an army of furious pygmies who regard Antaeus as their brother;



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waking up, the hero laughingly gathers the pygmies into his lion skin and carries them off. Dosso's picture thus illustrates an *ekphrasis*; Marek (1985) saw it as a later echo of the pictorial program of Alfonso's Camerino, where two of Titian's contributions were similarly based on descriptions of antique paintings by Philostratus.

Gibbons (1968) and Van Hasselt-von Ronnen (1970) noted further that the story is illustrated in a woodcut in the 1534 edition of Andrea Alciati's *Emblematum Liber* (cf. fig. 90), accompanied by the moralizing epigram, "In eos qui supra vires quicquam audent" (Against those who presume beyond their own strength). Since Dosso would certainly have been familiar with this very successful book, the epigram may also be regarded as

a key to the allegorical message of the painting, which is that the duke can effortlessly overcome the petty assaults of the enemies that surround him. Yet, as always, Dosso does not provide a literal illustration of his literary sources, unlike slightly later artists who treated the same subject, such as Lucas Cranach (1551; Stadtmuseum Weimar) and the engraver Hieronymus Cock (1563). Biedermann (1982) also emphasized, rightly, how unique the gentle humor of Dosso's interpretation is. Thus, the pygmies approach the hero with a mixture of curiosity and apprehension but no real ferocity, and he gathers them up into his lion skin carefully, almost protectively. Another visual witticism is the contrast between the heroic nudity of Hercules, who reclines like an antique river god,

Provenance

Probably Ercole II, Ferrara; Emil Gérard, Vienna (his sale, Miethke, Vienna, May 4, 1882, no. 52, as by Giorgione); Daniel Penther, Vienna (his sale, Miethke, Vienna, 1888); Julie von Benedek; bequeathed by her to the Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz (1895)⁵

In eos qui supra vires quic-
quam audent.

xx.



Fig. 90. Andrea Alciati, *Emblematum Libri Duo*, emblem xx. Lyons, 1554. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1924 (24.5)

References

- Schlosser 1900, pp. 266–68; Berenson 1907, p. 211; Patzak 1908, p. 40, n. 30; Gardner 1911, p. 233; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 67–68; L. Venturi 1913, p. 195; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 166–67; Suida 1923, pp. 73–74; A. Venturi 1928, p. 976; Berenson 1932, p. 174; Antal 1948, p. 88; Suida 1949, pp. 282–84; Puppi 1964, p. 31; Tietze-Conrat 1957, p. 111; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 41–42, 89; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 140–41, 226; Emmens 1969, p. 54; Van Hasselt-von Ronnen 1970; Schaefer 1978, p. 15; Biedermann 1982, pp. 125–37; Marek 1985, pp. 19, 73–74; Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, p. 116; Hale 1990, p. 84; Biedermann 1993, pp. 52–55; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 363; Biedermann 1995, pp. 90–91

and the motley band of pygmies dressed like contemporary German foot soldiers. Hale (1990) pointed out that the trio in the right middle ground, consisting of a plumed standard-bearer, a drummer, and a fifer, is one commonly found in prints.

Most critics, relying on a combination of circumstantial and stylistic evidence, have dated the picture to soon after Ercole's accession in 1534. It remains theoretically possible that the work was painted earlier, while Ercole was still heir apparent; and Emmens (1969) in fact argued that it is a thematic companion piece to *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* (cat. no. 27), with the *pusillanimitas* (timidity) of princes being criticized in the latter and implicitly contrasted with the *magnanimitas* displayed by *Hercules*. But, although they are similar in size and shape, the two pictures are stylistically very different, and Emmens's dating of the *Jupiter* to the early 1530s is unacceptable. An alternative theory is that the *Hercules* was painted as a pendant to *Venus Awakened by Cupid* (private collection), a picture that is indeed strikingly similar in composition.³ But the *Venus* too, it is generally recognized, is datable to the 1520s, while the *Hercules* fits comfortably into the mid-1530s. On the other hand, Van Hasselt-von Ronnen (1970) put the *Hercules* later, about 1543–46 (and thus attributed it to Battista alone), arguing that the painting's thematic relationship to Alciati's *Emblematum Liber* implies that

its execution coincided with the author's presence at the Ferrarese court, 1542–46 (Battista is known to have executed a portrait of Alciati in 1544).⁴ Nevertheless, there is no reason why the brothers could not have referred to Alciati's well-known book during the previous decade.

It remains difficult to date the picture precisely on purely stylistic criteria because of the likely collaboration of both brothers in its execution. In the past it has been given individually to each brother: to Dosso by Berenson (1907, 1968) and A. Venturi (1928) and to Battista by Patzak (1908), Suida (1923), Puppi (1964), and Gibbons (1968). But most critics, including Suida (1949), Biedermann (1982), and Ballarin (1994–95), have followed Mendelsohn (1914) in regarding the work as a collaboration; particularly convincing is Mezzetti's (1965a) analysis separating the hands. Following it, the overall design, dominated by the heroic nude posed in complex contrapposto, may safely be ascribed to Dosso, along with the sensitively executed head, encircled by a crown of vine leaves that catch the light at different angles as it curves around. The execution of the body, however, and especially of the flat splay of leaves at the top left, is much more perfunctory and may be attributed to Battista. Certainly by Battista are the clumsily articulated but expressive and amusing pygmies, as well as the background landscape. Even more than is true for Dosso in relatively late works like the *Allegory with Pan* of about 1529–32, Battista was here clearly inspired by the distant vistas of Netherlandish painters such as Patinir and Jan van Scorel; this is evident not just in the use of fantastically tall rocks and a taste for equally vertical towers and pinnacles, but also in the somewhat schematic progression into depth through zones of brown, green, and yellow to the misty blue-gray of the far distance. Although not without a certain Dossesque poetic suggestiveness, the effect remains somewhat planar and lacks the energy of Dosso's own feeling for nature.

PH

- A. Venturi 1892–93, pp. 221–23; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 360, 371, 390. See also Forti Grazzini 1982, p. 64.
- Attributed to Bartolomeo Nigrisoli, formerly attributed to Pastorino da Siena; see Ballarin 1994–95, p. 363, with an illustration of the medal, fig. 226.
- See London 1984, pp. 88–89.
- A. Venturi 1928, p. 985; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 381.
- Information on provenance from Biedermann 1995, pp. 90–91.

41. *Allegory of Fortune*

This imposing picture, with its pair of heroic-scale nudes, was rediscovered only in 1988. Its figures—which are artificially arranged in a relieflike composition, spotlit against a dark, neutral background, accompanied by prominent attributes—are clearly entirely allegorical in character, unusual in a work by Dosso. The significance of the pair has been convincingly elucidated in an unpublished paper by Dawson Carr.¹ Carr shows that the female nude, with her abundant cornucopia of fruit, flowers, and grain and her billowing drapery, represents the ancient Roman deity Fortuna (in Greek, Tyche). Venerated as the highly desirable bringer of bounty to mankind, Fortuna was also, however, fickle with her favors; hence she is often shown, as here, with her cloak fluttering in the wind. She is also often depicted standing or seated on a sphere, an obviously unstable form of support; here Dosso imaginatively represents the sphere as a large transparent bubble that is distended by the goddess's weight and in danger of bursting. Circumscribing the bubble is a band carrying the signs of the zodiac, seemingly an allusion to the changing fortunes of mankind driven by the movement of the stars. Carr understands Fortuna's single sandal as a reference to the legend of Jason, in which King Pelias was warned by an oracle that he would be overthrown by a man wearing one sandal. Thus, the motif alludes to the reverse aspect of Fortune: Nemesis, or Fate.

Consistent with his interpretation of the female figure as Fortune is Carr's identification of the strips of paper held up by the male figure as lottery tickets and of the golden urn as the receptacle in which they will be shuffled. The game of lottery, in which players are entirely dependent on mere luck or chance, was highly popular in the period. The male figure, in this reading, personifies Chance, a complementary aspect of Fortune; together the figures signify the volatility of fortune, which sometimes brings rich benefits but which may suddenly and unexpectedly turn into misfortune.

Supporting Carr's interpretation of the painting is the observation, made by both Ferino Pagden (in Vienna 1994) and Ciammitti (1998), that its female figure is echoed in the representa-

tion of Fortune-Abundance in the 1621 edition of Alciati's *Emblematum Liber*. The male figure is similarly repeated in that edition, Ciammitti noted, but this time as Mercury, with the lottery tickets replaced by the caduceus.

Carr pointed out that a bundle of lottery tickets was a favorite *impresa*, or heraldic device, of Isabella d'Este, sister of Duke Alfonso and the marchesa of Mantua, and suggested that the picture was commissioned by her. The *impresa* is lavishly displayed in her private apartments in the ducal palace in Mantua (fig. 91), where it resembles the bundle depicted by Dosso; and, as her biographer Paolo Giovio emphasized, Isabella's life was filled with sudden shifts of fortune. Most drastic was what happened after the death of her husband, Francesco II Gonzaga, in 1519, when she lost her position of power and influence at the Mantuan court, ceding her place to her son Federico's mistress, Isabella Boschetti. After 1531, however, when Federico married Margerita Paleologa, the marchesa regained some of her former influence, and Carr interprets the decoration of the urn, consisting of two golden crowns interlaced with palm fronds, as a reference to this fortunate marriage.

Although the suggestion that the *Allegory of Fortune* was commissioned by Isabella d'Este is difficult to prove, there is further circumstantial evidence in favor of it. Dosso must have known Isabella from the time of his activity at the Mantuan court in 1512, if not earlier; an early work, *Circe* (cat. no. 3), may even have been painted for her. In 1519 he visited her art collection in the company of Titian. In 1523 Dosso provided her with a view of Ferrara that was to serve as the model for a fresco under the loggia in her private apartment.² The development of Dosso's style in the later 1520s indicates that he was well acquainted with the work of Giulio Romano, who arrived in Mantua in 1524; Dosso's highly Giuliesque *Holy Family* of about 1527 (cat. no. 33) was almost certainly painted for either Isabella or Federico. Finally, a dating of the *Allegory* to between 1531 (when Federico married) and 1539 (when Isabella died) is consistent with its style.

Carr, followed by Ferino Pagden and Ballarin (1994–95), favored a date for the picture near the

Ca. 1535–38
Oil on canvas,
 $70\frac{1}{2} \times 85\frac{1}{2}$ in.
(178×216.5 cm)
J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles 89.PA.32

Provenance
Possibly Isabella d'Este,
Mantua (until 1539);
possibly Cardinal
Alessandro d'Este, Rome
(1624 inv.); possibly Carlo
Emmanuele I of Savoy,
Turin (1635 inv.); Litta
collection, Milan;³ sale,
Christie's, New York
(January 11, 1989, no.
192); acquired at that sale
by the J. Paul Getty
Museum

References
Ballarin 1994–95, p. 103;
Del Bravo 1994, p. 77;
Ferino Pagden in Vienna
1994, pp. 421–25;
Ciammitti 1998;
Fredericksen 1998



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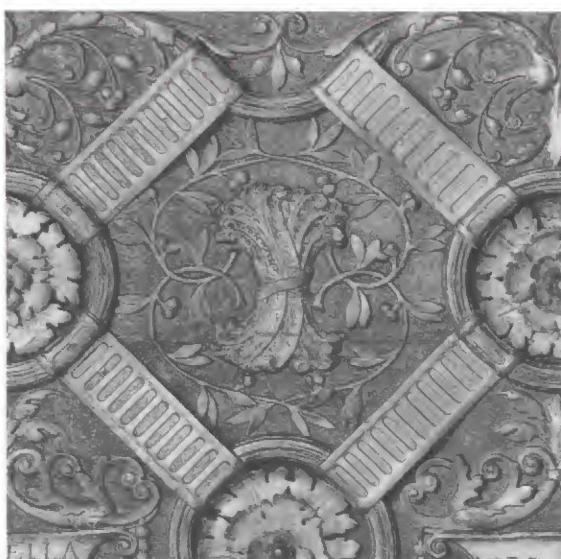


Fig. 91. *Impresa* with lottery tickets, from the ceiling of Isabella d'Este's Grotta (grotto) in the Corte Vecchia, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua

beginning of the decade. It is true that similarly complicated poses and artful arrangements of limbs are already found in the *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece, commissioned in 1527 (fig. 9); but more striking stylistic analogies are to the *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint George* painted for Massa Lombarda and datable on circumstantial evidence about 1535–38 (fig. 15) and the probably closely contemporary *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42). The *Allegory of Fortune* shares with those works the thickset body proportions, compressed space, strong chiaroscuro, resilient surfaces, and naturalism of still-life detail; and in type, the male figure, with his pronounced profile and heavy sandaled foot, is very similar to the saints. To judge from *Saint Michael* of 1540 (cat. no. 43),

at the end of his life Dosso was beginning to move away from this self-consciously classicizing yet still strongly naturalistic style to a different style, characterized by ornamental elegance; the *Allegory of Fortune* should probably be placed immediately before that phase, close in time to *Saint John the Baptist and Saint George*. A date of about 1535–38 is still compatible with Carr’s interpretation of the motif on the urn as a reference to Federico Gonzaga’s marriage of 1531.

As Carr noted, the picture is not recorded in the comprehensive inventory of the Gonzaga collection of 1627; if it was indeed commissioned by Isabella d’Este, it must have been sold by then. Ferino Pagden suggested identifying it with “A fortune on a panel, by Dossi” listed in the inventory of Cardinal Alessandro d’Este in Rome in 1624; this is possible, even though the support is said there to be wood.³ Fredericksen (1998) drew attention to a picture described in the 1635 inventory of Carlo Emmanuel I of Savoy as a “Female nude seated on a globe with a cornucopia, and the figure of a man. Comes from Dosso of Ferrara. Mediocre.”⁴ Although the description of the subject corresponds exactly to the *Allegory of Fortune*, Fredericksen wondered whether the phrases “comes from” and “mediocre” imply that this picture was only a copy.

X-ray photographs reveal that the two figures were painted over two smaller clothed figures in a landscape, a composition so radically different that it may be assumed to have represented an entirely different subject (fig. 92). Probably belonging to the present composition, on the other hand, but later removed, was a curtain that appeared behind the male figure in the upper left corner.

PH

1. Delivered at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, May 10, 1996. A previous version of this paper, delivered at the conference of the College Art Association in Chicago in 1992, formed the basis for the discussions of the picture in Ferino Pagden in Vienna 1994 and Ballarin 1994–95.

2. See C. M. Brown 1997, p. 167, n. 40.

3. “Una fortuna in tavola di mano del Dossi.” See Campori 1870, p. 62. It was not uncommon for seventeenth-century inventories to give incorrect information about supports; in another example, Dosso’s *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 36), was wrongly described in the inventory of Archduke Leopold’s collection as being on wood.

4. “Donna ignuda sedente sopra un mondo con cornucopia, et altra figura d'uomo. Vien da Dossi da Ferrara. Mediocre.” See Fredericksen 1998.

5. According to a nineteenth-century label on the reverse.

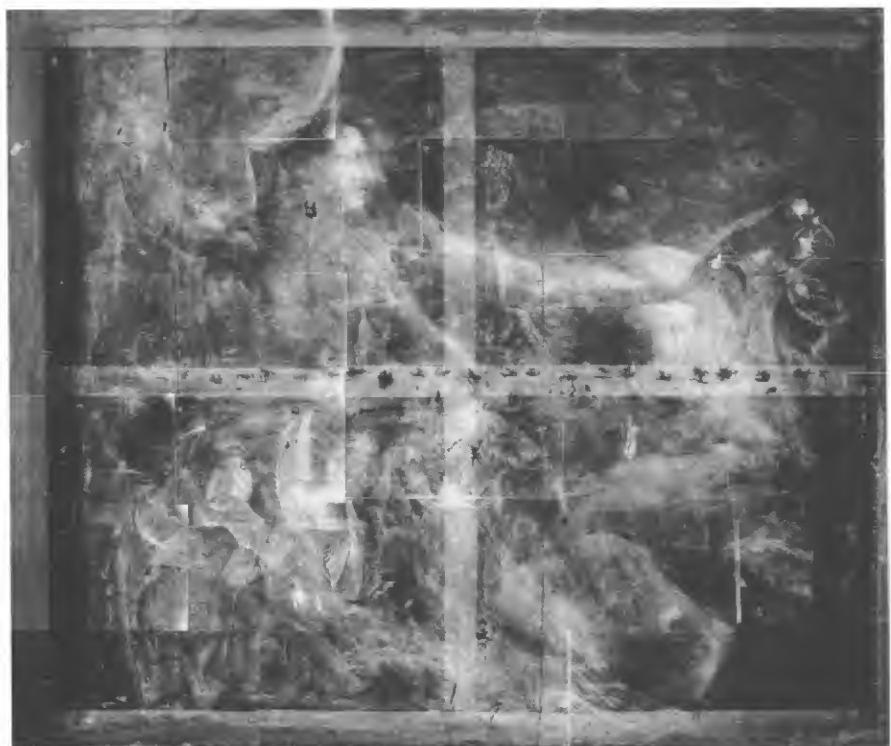


Fig. 92. X-radiograph of *Allegory of Fortune* showing a separate composition beneath, with smaller-scale figures, and a curtain that originally appeared at the left

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The picture’s condition is generally good, although, like many paintings by Dosso, it has suffered from overcleaning, and it was repeatedly punctured with a sharp object in the center. In the paint surface is a series of marked round concentric crackles, probably caused by the thickness of the preparation and the paint layer. The canvas thread count is 21 per centimeter in both directions. Remarkably, the edges of the canvas are intact except for a slight reduction at the bottom. There are two vertical sewn seams. The composition is framed by a painted line about ½ centimeter wide, black on the top and at the right, white on the left; very likely the bottom one was also white, and the line constituted an illusionistic frame. A dark gray preparation was used only beneath the lower areas of the canvas. In the area of the sky the layers are complex: Dosso first used a light brown preparation (this section was then painted as a landscape; see below). When the original composition was abandoned he added a gray layer, and under the areas of intense red vermilion an additional thin layer of dark gray. Various pigments have been identified: the red

cloak of the young man is vermillion mixed with red lake and then glazed with it; Fortune's veil is lead-tin yellow; the greens are copper resinate. (For the analyses, see the scientific report by David Scott and Dawn Muszynski, The Getty Conservation Institute, 1989.)

The x-radiograph shows at least one completely different composition underneath. It included an angel, clearly visible at the lower left, and another figure next to him that is less easy to read. The subject was quite possibly Tobias and the

Angel, with what might be the fish Tobias pulls out of the water visible in the foreground. In the background at the right is a crouching figure holding a veil, perhaps from yet another composition. The scene was set in a completely finished landscape, which is no longer visible.

During the 1990–91 restoration, two large additions on the left and right were removed. The dark background, parts of the male figure's cloak, and the golden urn, all of which had been completely repainted, were cleaned.

42. *Allegory of Hercules, also called Stregoneria (Witchcraft)*

Ca. 1540–42
Oil on canvas, $57\frac{1}{2} \times 56\frac{7}{8}$ in. (146×144.5 cm)
(as currently stretched);
 151×146 cm
(original dimensions)
Galleria degli Uffizi,
Florence

Provenance
Giannotto Cennini,
Siena; Cardinal Leopoldo
de' Medici, Florence
(1665–75); Medici collec-
tions (from 1675); Galleria
degli Uffizi, Florence
(from 1950)

References
Baruffaldi 1697–1722
(1844–46 ed., vol. 1,
pp. 292–93); Inghirami
1832, p. 43; Benson in
London 1894, p. 52;
Gruyer 1897, vol. 2,
p. 284; Berenson 1907,
p. 209; Giglioli 1910,
pp. 167–68; Gardner 1911,
p. 231; Zwanziger 1911,
pp. 71–72, 116;
Mendelsohn 1914,
pp. 114–15; A. Venturi

Too often undervalued, this fascinating and mysterious painting is one of Dosso's programmatic masterpieces in the comic genre—an "absurd picture" that convincingly probes in new, fantastical directions. Its playful wit and ability to provoke laughter have not diminished. The picture first emerged in 1665, described as "a painting with portraits of the duke of Ferrara's buffoons."¹ Over time it has been labeled, similarly inappropriately, "Bamboccia" (Lowlife scene) and "Stregoneria" (Scene of witchcraft), two subjects popular in seventeenth-century imagery. Berenson's title, *The Drinking Party* (1907), is completely inaccurate, since the painting contains nothing to drink and no glasses, but it may perhaps have prompted Calvesi's (1982) interpretation of the picture as a Bacchic scene.

Gibbons (1965) was the first to attempt an iconographic reading of the work. He considered the distaff, placed directly in the center of the composition, the most significant clue to the picture's meaning. This spinning tool, an object associated with women's work, is held by a young man, who apparently mocks the older, seminude man in the left foreground. Since Hercules was required to use a distaff to win the love of Omphale, Gibbons reasoned that the old man mocked by the courtier must be Hercules. Wearing around his head a garland of roses, symbol of victory in athletic games, and placed at one side of the composition, the great Greek hero seems here almost to have yielded to the erotic temptations offered by the buxom woman on the right, whose breasts are playfully to be confused

with the ripe fruit on the salver. Similar enticements are suggested by the tambourine and the mask abandoned on the table. Because the other woman next to the first one is more decently covered, Gibbons suggested that the two figures allude to another famous myth in which Hercules must choose between desirable Vice and half-hidden Virtue. This theory is supported by the presence at the top left of a goat, an animal whose very name means lewdness, and at the right of a little dog, symbol of virtuous fidelity. The objects on the parapet in the foreground—a magpie, symbol of mimicry; the paradisiacal fruit of the cherry tree; and piquant cheese, which stimulates physiological functions—all further confirm that the theme is Hercules at the Crossroads, choosing between Virtue and Vice.

Another Hercules, Ercole II d'Este, was twenty-seven when he succeeded his father, Alfonso I, as duke of Ferrara in 1534. Because of the young duke's name, and perhaps also because he was especially fond of athletic games, works concerning the Greek hero immediately became popular throughout the duchy; an early such depiction is the painting *Hercules and the Pygmies*, now in Graz (cat. no. 40). The subject of Hercules choosing between Virtue and Vice, which ends in an irrevocable decision to follow the virtuous path, seems particularly appropriate to a painting destined for the young ruler: the theme would warn him of the risks and temptations inherent in his position and would carry obvious moral overtones. Gibbons did not say who he believed the patron of this work to be, but he clearly thought



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that—despite its explicit and somewhat coarse sexual innuendo—it was commissioned as a kind of moral admonition to Ercole by a member of the serious, devout Christian circle around the duke's wife, Renée of France. In this vein Gibbons suggested that the two male figures at the top right are portraits of Dosso and his brother Battista, who holds the small white dog, symbol of their proven fidelity.

Gibbons was not unaware of a serious problem posed by his interpretation: this Hercules is represented not as a counterpart to the young, vital, athletic duke but rather as an old and debilitated figure, more laughable than pitiable. Humfrey (in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87) rightly observed that this irreverent approach would have gone well beyond the limits of propriety. Indeed, it seems unthinkable, in the 1928, pp. 973–74; Berenson 1932, p. 174; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, pp. 154–56; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 86, 88–89); Berenson 1936, p. 150; Rusconi 1937, pp. 116–17; Antal 1948, p. 91; Salvini 1952, p. 69; Gibbons 1965,



42, detail

morally driven context proposed by Gibbons, that Duke Ercole would have accepted so repugnant a representation of himself.

Calvesi (1982) raised another serious objection to Gibbons's reading of the picture. Noting that the two women are dressed similarly, he suggested that they could not be interpreted as symbolic opposites, Virtue and Vice; they would have to be two Virtues or two Vices. But with no choice to be made, the whole interpretation of the painting as Hercules at the Crossroads collapses. Calvesi offered an alternative theory, identifying the old man as Bacchus rather than Hercules, and the entire scene as a Bacchic initiation rite; the objects in the composition were, moreover, to be understood within a Christological context, with Bacchus as a prefiguration of Christ. But Humfrey rightly called for a return to a solid foundation of facts in interpreting the work and asserted that its obviously antiheroic intent could not be ignored.

Meanwhile, Barolsky (1978) had placed the painting in the category of the "grotesque and mock-heroic in North Italy," pointing out its witty, satirical, and clearly sexual character. It is Hercules' loss of virility that makes the picture comic; ridiculed as if he were an impotent drunk, he is rendered even more absurd and laughable by the bizarrely exaggerated allusions. Citing both visual evidence and contemporaneous writings, Barolsky convincingly demonstrated that the work belongs to a genre of grotesque paintings that would never have been regarded as having serious moral meaning. Duke Ercole would only have laughed before this picture, amused to discover more and more allusions, jokes, and double entendres; certainly the work would not have inspired serious reflection on either his role as ruler or the evils of drunkenness. But then one might legitimately ask: if the reigning duke is so clearly made fun of in this picture, even if only metaphorically, was the work really painted for him? The initial response would probably be: most likely not. However, consideration of some previously unexamined factors might transform that negative response into a positive one.

What we see in this representation is Hercules, the legendary hero, the strongest man who ever lived, reduced to a sort of madman, who in his old age plays like a child with the symbols of his bygone power—a stone ball and another ball tied to a cord, which were used in games more or less equivalent to today's shot put and hammer throw.

In his senile delirium he is self-absorbed and shut off from the world; all that remains of the hero of countless astounding exploits is a pathetic shell of muscles. Even his sexual appetite cannot be reawakened. It is useless to put before Hercules the lascivious goat; the woman's breasts, succulent as apples; the pea pods and the bird in the foreground, both clearly symbols of sexuality; the mask and tambourine, which were often part of orgiastic gatherings in ancient Greece; or the cheese, on account of which "the lover tosses all night/without ever lying down with his lady friend/if he ate a good piece at supper," as Ercole Bentivoglio wrote in Ferrara in the 1540s.² Hercules, a man who went from one woman to the next, is even jokingly invited to be faithful, as the presence of the dog attests. Finally, there is a suggestion that the hero's sexual organ, at the time generally described in extravagant terms,³ has shriveled to the size of the distaff handle depicted here.

Such a Hercules, like Aristophanes' old men, "filthy, crook-backed, wretched, shriveled, bald, toothless, and lame of their best limb,"⁴ is a character of nothing but fun and mockery; all who see him laugh. Vincenzo de'Maggi wrote in 1550 in *De Ridiculis* (referring to Book XXIX of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which had appeared in Alessandro De' Pazzi's Latin translation in 1536), "The comical is a defect, a turpitude, and a certain kind of deformity that does not involve pain, as there might be a face that is deformed and twisted but without pain."⁵ Maggi, a Brescian who was appointed professor of philosophy at Padua in 1528, developed an interest in the *Poetics*, but his studies on them became public only in 1541, when, substituting for his deceased colleague Bartolomeo Lombardi, he delivered a series of readings and lectures that caused quite a stir.⁶ Cosimo Rucellai, for example, wrote, "I have heard that [these lectures] are divine."⁷ In September 1543, Ercole d'Este sent a personal letter to his ambassador in Venice asking him to retain Maggi for the University of Ferrara (he would begin teaching there in 1544) and also as tutor to his son and heir.⁸

Another indication that the poetics of comedy were alive and well in Ferrara, and especially in the circle around Duke Ercole, appears in the work of the writer Ludovico Castelvetro of Modena. Educated in part at the University of Ferrara, he published his own commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* in Vienna in 1570, a year before

his death.⁹ Castelvetro's text offers an interesting variation on Maggi's ideas. He includes among the pleasing things that move one to laughter "everything that pertains to carnal delight, such as shameful parts, lascivious unions, memories, and representations of any of these." Yet "the aforementioned things do not make us laugh when we see or understand them in front of others; instead they confuse us with shame and make us blush."¹⁰ In other words, the presence of a group makes socially reprehensible what an individual finds funny.

In the second part of *De Ridiculis*, Maggi affirms that depravity, the ugliness of soul from which laughter springs, "can be of three types: over something that is true, or over a fiction, or by chance." But

the first thing that should attract our attention is the fact that pretended ugliness of the soul is ugly only on the surface, while in reality and in its substance it points to the beauty of the soul. In fact only he who knows, knows also how to ably pretend his ignorance. . . . Thus the false ugliness of the soul is not in conflict either with knowledge or with the true beauty of the soul. From this we are justified in saying that those who are excellent in this respect are elegant and clever.¹¹

Today too, in fact, the intentional inversion of reality, presenting something in the worst terms in order to demonstrate that it belongs among the best, is considered amusingly ironic.

Thus, if Duke Ercole wanted to praise himself in some way, to show that he was "elegant and clever"—and this after commissioning the hyperbolic painting in Graz (cat. no. 40), in which, enormous, he adopts the pose of a Greek god, while the tiny, comic pygmies swarm around him—what better way than to have himself represented as old and senile when in fact he was young and intelligent? By doing so he mocks those who think to mock him, showing the signs of Hercules' past greatness. That is to say, if anyone in the duke's entourage had sponsored such a painting, it would have been damaging to the dignity of the ruler; but coming from Ercole himself, it becomes a brilliant and witty gesture.

Maggi's treatise was published some ten years after this picture was completed and thus cannot, strictly speaking, be employed as definitive evidence in its interpretation. Nonetheless, Dosso's work is part of a long tradition that called for

pp. 493–99; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 48, 87; Puppi 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 111; Gibbons 1968, pp. 93–103, 177–78; Barolsky 1978, pp. 190–85; Borea 1979, p. 252; Mezzetti and Mattaliano 1980–83, vol. 3, p. 23; Calvesi 1982, pp. 209–13; Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, pp. 124–25; Tumidei in Pinacoteca di Brera 1991, p. 79; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 367

turning reality on its head, as happened, for example, in the carnival rites. In the same tradition is Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly*, which was widely distributed after its first printing in Basel in 1515 and contains in its chapter 29, "True Wisdom Is Madness," the author's famous apology:

If someone should try to strip away the costumes and makeup from the actors performing a play on the stage and to display them to the spectators in their own natural appearance, wouldn't he ruin the whole play? . . . Everything would suddenly look different: the actor just now playing a woman would be seen to be a man; the one who had just now been playing a young man would look old; the man who played the king only a moment ago would become a pauper; the actor who played god would be revealed as a wretched human being. . . . If at this point some wise man, dropped down direct from heaven, should suddenly jump up and begin shouting that this figure whom everyone reverences as if he were the lord god is not even a man because he is controlled by his passions like an animal, that he is a servant of the lowest rank because he willingly serves so many filthy masters; . . . and if he addressed everyone else in the same way, I ask you, what would he accomplish except to make everyone take him for a raving lunatic? Just as nothing is more foolish than misplaced wisdom, so too, nothing is more imprudent than perverse prudence.¹²

The situation Erasmus describes is very close to the one pictured in the present work. Indeed, Erasmus was well known and widely read in Ferrara and at the Este court, even after he had been condemned and his writings began to be regarded with suspicion. It is not by chance that in 1549 Pietro Lauro of Modena dedicated his translation of Erasmus's *Colloqui* to Renée of France, Ercole's wife.¹³ Thus many factors converge to support a conclusion: the only possible patron for this painting that mocks Hercules is Ercole himself.

As for the dating of the work, Berenson (1907) was the first to place it late in Dosso's career, on the basis of style, and subsequent scholars have all agreed. Gibbons (1968) dated it to the mid-1530s; several other scholars, including Longhi (1934), Mezzetti (1965a), and Tumidei (in *Pinacoteca di Brera* 1991), believe it to be the artist's last work. They date it to just before 1542, when "having already been passed over by the times, the painter fell back into the oppressive atmosphere of his land, from which his dreams and the frenzy of

youth had, for a time, freed him."¹⁴ The synthesis of large forms starkly brought out by sharp facets of light, and the sculptural massings of the figures, which are handled almost as if they were carved from stone rather than painted, are obvious links to the Getty *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41), a painting dated to the mid-1530s. But the planar composition, attention to contrapposto, and display of vaguely Michelangelesque musculature ultimately result in a painting that is less brilliant than the Dresden *Saint Michael* (cat. no. 43), which documents date to 1540. This work must therefore be considered later than the one in Dresden and thus from the last two years of the artist's life.

It is not possible to explain the diminished quality of this painting as resulting from the intervention of Battista, who throughout the 1530s was ever more firmly in control of the workshop. Battista's characteristic style is not discernible here, and the idea of a collaboration between the brothers, first put forth by Mendelsohn (1914) and A. Venturi (1928), has not been seriously considered since. Recent x-rays of the painting (fig. 93) also seem to exclude such a possibility, for they show the numerous pentimenti that are typical of Dosso's working method. The most important changes were made to the figure of Hercules, who was initially much thinner and whose arms and head were positioned differently. The man holding the distaff originally wore a cuirass covered by a cloak. The woman half-hidden behind him was at first placed higher, making her blouse, with its elegant decorated borders, more visible; she wore a crown of flowers and leaves. The woman at the right was even more scantily clad than at present, her dress sliding down her shoulders to expose part of her blouse, which was painted out in the final version.

The insistent use of profiles and a kind of sculptural crystallization of forms under a too-intense light make more convincing the connection first suggested by Longhi (1934) between this work and two panels by Dosso, *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint George*, from the Oratorio del Sacramento dell'Arciconfraternita di Santa Maria at the Ospedale Maggiore in Massa Lombarda, now in the Brera (fig. 15); therefore the date of these paintings is germane to a discussion of the *Allegory of Hercules*. The oratory in Massa Lombarda was not built until 1577, so the two panels must have come from somewhere else. Suida identified their original location as the church of San Paolo in

Massa Lombarda, on the basis of some intriguing indirect evidence: referring to a portrait medal by Pastorino de' Pastorini of Marchese Francesco d'Este, lord of the locality, he suggested that the Saint George of the panel is a likeness of the marchese himself.¹⁵ Francesco d'Este, an ardent supporter of the church of San Paolo, who, according to his will of 1578, wished to be buried there, undertook to furnish it with works of art (such as an altarpiece by Garofalo dated 1538 and Bastianino's *Conversion of Saint Paul* of 1577, both now Amministrazione dell'Ospedale, Massa Lombarda). If Suida is right to connect the two panels of saints in the Brera with Francesco d'Este and the church of San Paolo, then the panels must have been painted after 1537, the date inscribed on the building as the year of its completion. The stylistically related *Allegory of Hercules* would fall into the same time frame, although other stylistic considerations cited above suggest a date a few years later.

ML



Fig. 93. X-radiograph of *Allegory of Hercules* showing numerous changes to the figures and their costumes

1. For the circumstances of Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici's acquisition of the painting, see Giglioli 1910, pp. 167–68.
2. "L'amante tutta notte si dimena / senza posar mai con la sua amica / s'egli un buon pezzo n'ha mangiato a cena." See Camporesi 1990, pp. 90–92.
3. At the end of the century Shakespeare mocked such hyperbole when he had a character describe a page playing Hercules as "not so big as the end of his club." *Love's Labour's Lost*, act 5, scene 1, in Shakespeare 1990, p. 186.
4. Aristophanes, quoted in *The Praise of Folly* in Erasmus 1979, p. 48.
5. Vincenzo de' Maggi, *De Ridiculis*, quoted in Musacchio and Cordeschi 1985, p. 36. For the original Latin text, see Weinberg 1970.
6. For Maggi's career, see Musacchio and Cordeschi 1985, pp. 15–22.
7. Letter to Benedetto Varchi, December 17, 1541. Weinberg 1961, vol. 1, p. 373.
8. Musacchio and Cordeschi 1985, pp. 15–16.
9. Ibid., pp. 23–30.
10. "Tutte le cose che pertengono a diletto carnale, come le membra vergognose, i congiungimenti lascivi, le memorie et le similitudini di quelli." "Le predette cose non ci fanno ridere quando ci sono proposte aperte avanti agli occhi della fronte o della mente in presenza di persone, anzi ci confondono di vergogna et ci fanno arrossare." Ibid., p. 88.
11. Ibid., pp. 52–53.
12. English version from Erasmus 1979, pp. 43–44.
13. Cantimori 1975, pp. 43–44.
14. Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 89).
15. Suida 1949, p. 283. See also Tumidei in *Pinacoteca di Brera* 1991, pp. 77–79.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is in very good condition and was restored for the exhibition. However, there is a sizable area of damage under the neck of the female figure on the right, as well as a few minor holes and crimp marks. The canvas thread count is 15 per centimeter horizontally and 17 per centimeter vertically. There is a vertical sewn seam 95 centimeters from the left-hand side; areas of the seam were covered with lead white. The imprints of the diagonal reinforcements of the strainer are visible in all four corners; they are 6 centimeters wide and all of the same length. Although there are no other imprints of the original strainer and no marked cusping, a half-centimeter-wide strip of unpainted canvas all around—an unusual occurrence—indicates that the painting has not been cut. Beyond the unpainted strip, remnants of a black border are visible all around. Since the canvas has irregular edges, perhaps it was originally tacked flat onto a larger strainer and the composition painted inside the black border. Currently the canvas is nailed to a slightly smaller stretcher, with the original border and some of the painted surface folded over

on all four sides. The entire original painted surface measures 151 by 146 centimeters.

The red sleeve of the figure in the upper left-hand corner is on a modeled white preparation with the highlights densely painted on in lead white, over which red lake has been applied. The red is dabbed over an even, thin white preparation for the light red bodice of the figure in the upper right. The wide green collar of the woman on the right is painted over a layer of a dense yellow, presumably lead-tin yellow. There are indications of dabbing on the carpet laid over the table: Dosso seems to have dabbed a darker pigment such as natural or raw sienna over the red, to create the effect of a weave. The scumbled white hairs (with partial beading) of the little dog on the right (fig. 42) and the fur on the sleeve of the man

behind Hercules are particularly detailed.

The x-radiographs reveal some interesting changes, among them the extensive reworking of the arms of the foreground figure. The breasts of the woman on the right were modified, and the other woman's hairstyle was painted over an earlier version that included a wreath of grape leaves; her shoulder was also lowered. The outfit of the smiling young man was completely altered. Infrared viewing in transmitted sunlight reveals a few bold brushstrokes of underdrawing defining some of the facial features.

Analysis done by Narayan Khandekar and Michael Schilling of the Getty Conservation Institute identified orpiment in the yellow cloak of the woman on the right, and walnut oil as the medium.

DOSSO DOSSI WITH BATTISTA DOSSI

43. *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan and Saint George and the Dragon*

1540
Oil on canvas. *Saint Michael*: 80 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
(205 × 119 cm); *Saint George*: 81 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 47 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
(206 × 121 cm)
Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen,
Gemäldegalerie Alte
Meister, Dresden 125, 124

Provenance
Duke Ercole II, Palazzo
del Corte, Ferrara;
Galleria Ducale, Modena
(early seventeenth century
inv.; ca. 1720 inv., with
Saint George as by
Girolamo da Capri; 1744
inv., with *Saint George* as
by Garofalo); Francesco
III d'Este, Modena;
Augustus III, king of
Poland and elector of

Documents show that these two large-scale images of victorious warrior saints were completed for Duke Ercole II in the early months of 1540. The attributions of both pictures have been much discussed, but the splendid vitality of the *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan*, paradoxically combined with an exceptional, almost Parmigianinesque refinement of detail, clearly indicates that this is a substantially autograph work by Dosso. Dosso may also have provided a basic design for *Saint George and the Dragon*, since it emanated from his workshop, but the somewhat more mechanical execution of this picture implies that it is mostly by Battista.

Published by Venturi in 1893,¹ the documents were first associated with these Dresden pictures by Mendelsohn (1914). They record three payments made from the ducal exchequer to Dosso, Battista, and their assistants on February 28, March 6, and March 13, 1540, "a lauore quadrij grandj de S.^{to} michiele e de S.^{to} zorzo del S. n. Ill.^{mo}" (for working on large pictures of Saint Michael and Saint George for our illustrious lord). A final payment made to Battista on April 30 was for two smaller pictures, now lost, that were to be placed above the pair of saints "in corte," presumably, that is, in the

ducal palace (the room in which they were intended to hang is not identifiable)—and in February and June the painter Calzolaretto was paid for gilding the frames.² Since light falls on the saints from opposite directions, it is likely that the pictures were designed to hang on either side of a window; their complementary compositions, with an emphatic diagonal descending from top left to bottom right in *Saint Michael* and one in the reverse direction in *Saint George*, are consistent with this inference. The two pictures were sent to the ducal palace in Modena sometime after the transfer there of the Este court in 1598, and they are recorded in several ducal inventories of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries before they were included in the sale of one hundred Este pictures to the royal collection in Dresden in 1744–46.

Although the Modena inventories consistently attribute *Saint Michael* to Dosso, they reflect a confusion about the authorship of *Saint George*. In 1663 it was given to Girolamo da Carpi;³ two early-eighteenth-century inventories call it the work of Dosso, then again Girolamo;⁴ and by the time of the sale to Dresden it had acquired an attribution to Garofalo.⁵ No modern critic has agreed with this

last opinion, but Berenson's (1907) view that Girolamo da Carpi was largely or wholly responsible for the *Saint George* was repeated by Zwanziger (1911) and recently again by Ballarin (1994–95). It is true that the figure of the princess in the middle ground, with her oval head and flowing hair, is strongly reminiscent of Girolamo's types, as in, for example, his *Chance and Penitence* of 1541 and his *Judith*, both of which were also included in the sale to Dresden. The dramatically lit background of the *Saint George* also resembles landscapes by Girolamo. On the other hand, the documents make no mention of Girolamo, who by 1540 was a well-established master, and thus it is unlikely that he assumed primary responsibility for the picture; additionally, any contribution by him is likely to have been made in the context of a work essentially by Battista, as is the case with the *Venus on the Eridanus*, also in Dresden.⁶ Indeed, the uniformly waxy surfaces of the horse, the dragon, and the plants in the foreground, as well as the somewhat pedantic attention to still-life detail, are entirely consistent with Battista's later style, which can also be seen, for example, in *Venus and Cupid* of about 1535–40 (cat. no. 53), and in the *Allegory of Justice* of 1544 (fig. 11).

Gibbons (1968) thought that Battista also executed the *Saint Michael*, following a design by Dosso. Some support for this view may be found in the fact that the treatment of the flames and of Satan's hair and beard is similar to that in Battista's probably closely contemporaneous *Night* (cat. no. 54); at the same time, a comparison of the dramatic *Saint Michael* and the much tamer *Saint George* suggests that any contribution by Battista to the former was strictly limited.

As triumphant warriors against evil, Saints Michael and George enjoyed a wide popularity among the feudal nobility of medieval and Renaissance Europe in general and at Ferrara in particular. George was patron saint of the city and Michael of the Este castle; moreover, Duke Ercole, like his father, Alfonso, was a proud member of the French chivalric order of Saint Michael. Both saints are represented frequently in Ferrarese art, including works by Dosso (cf. cat. nos. 6, 8, fig. 15), who by about 1518 had already painted them together in his altarpiece for Sant'Agostino in Modena (fig. 6). It has often been observed that the compositions of both Dresden canvases are based on prestigious prototypes by Raphael. The figure group of the *Saint George* is very close indeed to that of Raphael's *Saint George and the Dragon* of about 1504–6, now in the National Gallery



Fig. 94. Raphael, *Saint George and the Dragon*. Oil on panel. Andrew W. Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

of Art, Washington (fig. 94). Since this picture was sent to England shortly after being painted, Dosso and Battista must have known it in another version, perhaps the "S^{to} Giorgio di Rafaello da Orbino" recorded as being in the collection of Margarita Gonzaga, duchess of Ferrara, in 1586–88.⁷

The *Saint Michael* represents a less literal but still unmistakable borrowing from Raphael's *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan* of 1518 (fig. 95); the full-scale cartoon for that work arrived in Ferrara as a diplomatic gift from the painter to Duke Alfonso in November 1518.⁸ (That was probably just after the completion of Dosso's altarpiece for Modena, in which the restrained torsion of the figure of the archangel is still inspired by an earlier phase of Raphael's style, represented by such works as the *Galatea* in the Villa Farnesina, Rome, which Dosso could have seen while in Rome in 1513.) But it was to be another two decades before Dosso was ready to imitate the convoluted elegance of Raphael's *Saint Michael*, with its sophisticated tension between the effect of deep space, created by the spiraling pose,

Saxony, Dresden (from 1746; 1752 inv. no. 34, with *Saint George* as by Garofalo)

References

- Gherardi 1744 (1986 ed., p. 65); Campori 1855, pp. 192, 467; A. Venturi 1882, pp. 307, 356;
- Morelli 1891 (1893 ed., pp. 142–43); Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, p. 282; A. Venturi 1900, p. 36; Berenson 1907, p. 208; Gardner 1911, p. 161; Zwanziger 1911, pp. 60–61, 108; L. Venturi 1913, pp. 190, 193; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 115–18, 162–64;
- Serafini 1915, pp. 58–60;
- A. Venturi 1928, pp. 944, 951, 975; Posse 1929, pp. 61–62, 63; Belzoni



43. *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan*



43. *Saint George and the Dragon*

1932, p. 420; Berenson
1932, pp. 173, 254;
Tervarent 1944, p. 291;
Antal 1948, p. 87; Dreyer
1964–65, p. 226; Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 47, 78; Berenson
1968, p. 111; Gibbons
1968, pp. 35, 237–38;
Freedberg 1971 (1975 ed.,
p. 322); Mezzetti 1977,
p. 71; Fiori in Bologna
1983, p. 318; Humfrey in
Bologna, Washington,
New York 1986–87,
pp. 125–28; Clough 1987,
pp. 284–85; Cordellier
1988, pp. 237–39; Winkler
1989, pp. 124, 126; Ballarin
1994–95, pp. 368–69;
Humfrey 1998b; Lucco
1998

Fig. 95. Raphael, *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan*. Oil on canvas, transferred from wood. Musée du Louvre, Paris



fluttering drapery, and foreshortened limbs and wings, and the bold, flat pattern created by the silhouetting of those elements. The protagonist of Dosso's *Saint Michael* altarpiece of 1534 painted for Reggio Emilia (fig. 26), for example, for all the beauty of his accoutrements, still strikes an uncomplicated relieflike pose and is still stiffly constrained in his action. Even here in the Dresden *Saint Michael*, Dosso has not adopted the space-creating pirouette of Raphael's prototype; nevertheless he responds magnificently to its spirit by combining dynamic design with refined, even precious, detail in a manner unprecedented in his art. Thus, while the ornamental trappings of the archangel (the blue sandals tied with ribbons and decorated by masks, the golden fringes of the tunic, the brooch, the lions' heads on the shield) are even more elaborate than those in the earlier picture for Reggio, the effect of space and movement created by the swirl of smoke, clouds, and drapery is as powerful as anything in his previous output. Moving away from the sometimes coarse realism of the mid- to late 1530s, epitomized by *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint George* painted for Massa Lombarda (fig. 15) and the *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42), Dosso seems here to be experimenting with

a new style that his death two years later prevented him from developing further.

A badly damaged drawing in the Louvre (Cabinet des Dessins, no. 9899) was published by Cordellier (1988) as a compositional study for the *Saint Michael*. Although its quality and stylistic character are hard to assess, the compositional differences between the drawing and the painting support Cordellier's view that the former is indeed preparatory to the latter and not a free copy after it.

PH

1. A. Venturi 1892–93, pp. 131–32, nos. CCXXXVIII, CCXXXIX, CCXL, CCXLIII. See also Ballarin (1994–95), doc. no. 332.
2. Manni 1986, p. 124.
3. Bentini and Curti 1993, p. 61.
4. A. Venturi 1882, p. 307, no. II (inventory of beginning of eighteenth century), p. 313, no. III (inventory of before 1720), p. 356, no. I (inventory of 1743).
5. Gherardi 1744 (1986 ed., pp. 64–65); Winkler 1989, p. 124 (quoting Gherardi inventory of 1752).
6. For this picture and its attribution, see Gibbons 1968, pp. 223–24.
7. Inventory published by A. Venturi 1888, pp. 425–26.
Clough (1987) suggested that this picture was identical with one noted earlier by Giampaolo Lomazzo in the church of San Vittore in Milan and that it was painted for Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, shortly after the Washington picture was sent to England. One could argue that the close dependence of Battista's *Saint George* on Raphael suggests that Duchess Margarita's picture was already in Ferrara, not Milan, by 1540; on the other hand, Dosso and Battista worked together at the Villa Imperiale in Pesaro in 1530 for Duke Guidobaldo's successor, Francesco Maria Della Rovere, and so could have known yet another version or perhaps a drawing of Raphael's painting that was close to its source.
8. Documents in Campori 1863, pp. 12–13; see Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 134.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

Saint Michael Overcoming Satan

Recently restored, the painting seems to be in very good condition, although in the past it was transferred from canvas to canvas and the gesso ground was removed. The survival of an original black border all around, similar to those on the Uffizi *Allegory of Hercules* (cat. no. 42) and the Getty *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41), suggests that the painting has not been reduced in size. However, the imprint of a strainer 3 centimeters from the right edge and another 1 centimeter from the left edge might indicate that the black border was originally wider, since

the normal width of a strainer was about 6 centimeters. The canvas is made up of three vertical strips; the seams are probably butt-joined, although this is difficult to ascertain because of the transfer.

The blue of the boots is painted over a modeled white or light blue substrate. The saint's vest seems to be painted in orpiment. Details such as the nails are very carefully done, and the devil has individually delineated hairs on his chest as well as bushy eyebrows. The detailed tassels on Saint Michael's skirt are painted to create an effect of violent movement.

Saint George and the Dragon

Recently restored, the painting is in very good condition. Many areas of pronounced shrinkage crackles—in the shadow of the horse's legs, on Saint George's armor, and in the left background—might be an indication of pentimenti or of the use of slow-drying walnut oil as a medium. Details such as the armor and the flowers in the foreground are very carefully executed. The landscapes in this painting and in that of Saint Michael do not seem characteristic of the work of either Dosso or Battista, as observed elsewhere.

Portraits

The question of Dosso's portraiture still lacks the kind of firm foundation on which discussion can be based and judgments made. That the artist sometimes painted portraits is documented by records of payment in the Este account books. In June of 1514, for example, he was supposed to execute several portraits to be sent to Rome; on March 12, 1524, he was paid for portraits of the daughters of Isabella of Aragon, former queen of Naples, who was living at the court of Alfonso I; between April and June 1527 he painted two portraits of Ercole d'Este, and one of someone only known as "M. Libo"; in April 1540, together with his brother Battista, he was asked to reproduce the features of "the firstborn prince," that is, Alfonso II d'Este. These works, which are few in number compared to the artist's production of sacred and secular paintings, have all been lost or are now unrecognizable. Moreover, the record of payment on June 4, 1524, for "a portrait of the former most illustrious Duke Ercole"¹—if it does indeed refer to a painting now in the Galleria Estense at Modena (fig. 45), as Mendelsohn (1914) was the first to suggest—actually presents further problems. First, in the documented history of the painting there is no mention whatsoever of Dosso's authorship (in the eighteenth century it was believed to be the work of Girolamo da Carpi);² second, the qual-

ity of the work itself is so generic, frozen, and archaizing that it can be explained only by regarding it as Dosso's copy of an unfinished original by Ercole de Roberti. Pallucchini (1945) has gone so far as to claim that the Modena canvas is an almost contemporaneous copy of a portrait that Dosso himself copied from the Ercole de Roberti painting; a copy of a copy.

The poverty of documentation for the portraits, compared with the wealth of information on other products of Dosso's prolific studio, is perhaps a reflection of the artist's disinclination to work in this genre. There is not much basis to Mezzetti's (1965a) assertion that Dosso must have been active as a portraitist because the faces in some of his secular paintings have qualities of the type seen in naturalistic portraits. In fact, that same scholar also acknowledged Dosso's tendency to typify physiognomies rather than capture personal features.

Still, since the beginning of this century there has been a continuing effort to create an image of Dosso the portraitist. Adolfo Venturi is responsible for many attempts to attribute portraits to him—usually on the strength of crepuscular light, a broken brushstroke, or a Venetian-type composition, whether Giorgionesque or Titianesque—while Berenson and Mendelsohn made numerous suggestions of



Fig. 96. Attributed to Dosso Dossi, *Portrait of Annibale Saracco*. Location unknown; formerly Wimbourne Collection, Ashby St. Ledgers

their own. None of these, however, has survived the scrutiny of subsequent scholars. And even an empirical method of attributing to Dosso portraits of individuals known to be Ferrarese has not stood the test of time. For example, the portrait *Girolamo Beltramoto da Ferrara* (Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome), whose subject is known from the little sign he holds in his hand, was attributed to Dosso by Berenson (1907) but today is in too poor a state of conservation to support any judgment. Similarly, the portrait formerly in the Wimborne collection of Annibale Saracco, head steward at the court of Duke Alfonso I (fig. 96), has a nineteenth-century attribution to Dosso that was revived by Mendelsohn in 1914 but cannot be verified today because the work has been missing for many years. In photographs this painting looks very much like the *Portrait of a Man with Five Rings* at Hampton Court (no. 80), which, after being attributed in the seventeenth century to the nonexistent "Bartolomeo del Piombo," later to Raphael, and later still to Giorgione, has since the end of the last century been regarded by most scholars as the work of Dosso.

A picture in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, identified by Gibbons (1968a) as a portrait of the Ferrarese Angelo Perondoli and widely attributed to Dosso, might seem a likely candidate, but the attribution remains dubious; the painting is generically Dossesque but lacks some of the artist's typical stylistic traits, such as his characteristic brushwork and landscape style and the richness and sensuousness of his color.

The most coherent attempt to reconstruct Dosso's activity in this realm was made by Longhi (1956), who attributed to him the portraits in Paris (cat. no. 45), Stockholm (cat. no. 44), Wichita (cat. no. 49), and a private collection in Connecticut (cat. no. 48); to this group have been added the Cambridge portrait (by Antonelli Trenti 1964; cat. no. 47) and the *Portrait of an Old Man in a Fur Collar* in a private Milanese collection (by Ballarin in Paris 1993; cat. no. 46). Thus, our assessment of Dosso's merits in the genre is essentially based on these paintings.

Even so, the attribution of this group of works does not rest on certainties. Since all the documented portraits have been lost, scholarly research can only start over with a purely philological approach that involves not only issues of style but also ones of technique and execution. This is what has been attempted in our research, for which the only reliable place to begin was the similarities between images in portraits thus far attributed to Dosso and those in other paintings definitely by him. In the end, the portrait that seems to me the most likely candidate for inclusion in the Dosso oeuvre is the one now in Connecticut, alongside which may be placed, but with more reservations, the portrait in Milan, which is stylistically similar although the technical method is different. I also accept the Hampton Court portrait and the lost *Annibale Saracco*, the latter only tentatively because it is not possible to study the original. Other inclusions and exclusions are explained in the entries that follow.

ML

1. "Uno Retracto del quondam III.^{mo} Ducha herculle."

A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 443, no. XXXIII.

2. See Della Palude 1784, p. 94.

Dosso Dossi (?)

44. *Portrait of a Man*

The painting is framed on all four sides by a black band, which was previously folded over and now is visible as part of the picture field. Its bottom edge cannot be part of the original border, however, since—as the eighteenth-century engraving discussed below confirms—the lower part of the hands has been cut off (the rough edge is now restored).

When it was first documented, in the inventory of the collection of Christina of Sweden in Rome in 1662,¹ the painting was called a portrait of Cesare Borgia and the artist given as Correggio. An engraved reproduction of it by François-Jacques Dequeuauviller (fig. 98) illustrated Couché's late-eighteenth-century catalogue of the Orléans collection, in which the identification as a portrait of Cesare Borgia remained firm, but a few doubts began to emerge about the attribution to Correggio, who was born too late to have portrayed Borgia from life; on the basis of a passage in Vasari it was suggested, in the caption to the engraving, that the cartoon for a portrait of Borgia by Piero di Cosimo had been used as a model by Correggio. But the conviction that Correggio was the painter continued to prevail throughout the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth (the only objection came from Waagen [1838, 1854], who rejected that attribution but offered no alternatives).

In 1926 Otto Benesch assigned the painting to Girolamo Romanino, an opinion that was quite widely accepted until 1955 and 1956, when Gregori and Longhi proposed Dosso Dossi as the artist. Since then, the attribution has veered back and forth between Dosso and Girolamo.²

Even some of those convinced of Romanino's authorship of the portrait found in it a quality of romanticism that brought Dosso's name to mind. This romantic aura is linked to the very particular way the sitter is presented, gazing fixedly at the viewer and in the process of drawing his sword. That portrait mode belongs to a very brief period in the cultural history of Northern Italy, about 1515–20; in connection with the wars waged for

control of Lombardy, it became fashionable to violate the rules of social decorum and have oneself portrayed with an air of great militaristic audacity and open defiance of the world.

On the other hand, societal traditions are clearly lurking in the background, since the artist chose to use a model of portraiture that goes back to Raphael's *Baldassare Castiglione*, now in the Louvre (fig. 97). In fact, Shearman (1979, 1992) and Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) insist that this portrait is one of those that derive earliest and most clearly from the eminent Raphael painting, which had arrived in Mantua, Castiglione's native city, in 1516.

Also not to be denied is the painting's strong intellectual debt to Titian, who had begun to make himself known in Ferrara in 1516. Especially the landscape juxtaposition of the dark masses of buildings and the bright sky, the shimmering light, the overall tone tending toward twilight, and the sparkling brilliance of areas of the white shirt embroidered in yellow recall ideas of Titian, seen, for example, in the so-called *Three Ages of Man* in Edinburgh (fig. 67)—executed, according to Vasari, in the summer of 1516—and the contemporaneous *Sacred and Profane Love* (Galleria Borghese, Rome).³ The adherence to Titian's painterly method of regularly juxtaposing a dark tone against a light one, or vice versa, is even more clearly visible in the x-ray recently made of the painting, which reveals numerous revisions (fig. 99): the beard extended farther to the left; the sitter was apparently wearing a cap or snood under his hat; in the landscape, other buildings originally on the left and near the figure's shoulder were covered by masses of trees; and there were highlights on the right shoulder, sleeves, and bodice of the velvet jacket that conveyed contour and volume but today are hidden under a uniformly dark tone. In addition, it is possible that the sky extended into the right-hand side of the painting, where today one sees only the earth-toned wall.

Although the x-ray shows no trace of stars in the sky, the landscape seems conceived of as

Ca. 1517–19 (?)
Oil on canvas, 33 5/8 ×
28 in. (85.5 × 71 cm)
Nationalmuseum,
Stockholm

Provenance
Queen Christina of Sweden, Rome (1662 inv., no. 188; 1689 inv., no. 43, as by Correggio); Cardinal Decio Azzolino, Rome (1689); Marchese Pompeo Azzolino, Rome (1689–92); Prince Livio Odescalchi, Rome (1692–1713); Prince Baldassare and Cardinal Benedetto, Odescalchi heirs, Rome (1713 inv., no. 116; 1721 inv., no. 20); Duke Philippe d'Orléans, Paris (1721–27); by inheritance to Louis and Philippe, dukes d'Orléans, Paris (1727–90); Édouard Walkers, Paris (ca. 1790); Laborde de Mereville, Paris and England (early 1790s); Bryan, London (1798 ms. cat., no. 58, as by Correggio); Thomas Hope, Deepdene Manor (from 1798); Hope family (1838); Hjalmar Linder (1919); given by him to the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (1919)

References
Dubois de Saint-Gelais 1727, p. 58; Couché 1786,

pl. 55; Buchanan 1824, vol. 1, p. 63; Waagen 1838, vol. 1, p. 322; Waagen 1854, vol. 2, p. 490; Granberg 1896, no. 9; Stryienski 1913, no. 188; Benesch 1926, p. 98; Granberg 1929–31, vol. 1, p. 136; Berenson 1932, p. 488; Sirén 1933, p. 145; Berenson 1936, p. 420; Lechi and Panazza in Bergamo 1939, p. 285; Nicodemi 1939, p. 370; Stockholm, Nationalmuseum 1939, p. 123; Gregori 1955, p. 24; Longhi 1956, p. 190; Stockholm, Nationalmuseum 1958, p. 171; Gilbert 1959, p. 263; Ferrari 1961, p. 311; Volpe 1961 (1994 ed., p. 21); Bossaglia 1963, pp. 1045–46; Puppi 1964, p. 32; Karling 1965, pp. 42–59; Mezzetti 1965a, p. 117; Grate in Stockholm 1966, p. 477, no. 1178; Waterhouse 1966, pp. 372–75; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, p. 262; Shapley 1968, p. 76; Shearman 1979, p. 266; Stockholm, Nationalmuseum 1990, p. 307; Shearman 1992, p. 137; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 404–7; Nova 1994b, p. 360; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 61–68, 308; Romani 1996, p. 95



Fig. 97. Raphael, *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris

moonlit, with the moon outside the field of vision on the upper right. If that is the case, it is legitimate to ask whether the idea was not prompted by an intense reconsideration of the innovations of Giorgione, exemplified by the now-lost *Orpheus in Moonlight* that is documented in a painting and an engraving by David Teniers. Innovations of that sort were in progress throughout the Po River valley in the late 1510s.

Unfortunately the portrait has yielded no clues to a credible, well-founded identification of the sitter.⁴ And, while it does appear possible to assign a date of about 1516–20, verifying the authorship of the painting is problematic. It seems to be somewhat flattened all over and not to be in Doso's usual hand; as the recent x-ray studies mentioned above reveal, it is a much reworked composition, and one difficult to read. But more perplexing is the close correspondence between the composition brought to light by the x-rays and the Dequevailler engraving: the same low wall seemingly continuing on the right side; very visible highlights on the clothing; perhaps the same sky background on the right, with the right brim of the hat set against a cloud (in the painting, a wall now fills that area). The landscape was different from the current one, with more buildings but without, for example, the group of trees near the left shoulder,

which to Mezzetti (1965a) seemed "purely Dossian" and to Longhi (1956) looked like a "wonderful, frothy countryside, almost an unexpected foreshadowing of Constable, [which] clearly bears the mark of Doso's 'festive hand.'" In short, in the late eighteenth century the painting's appearance was quite similar to what the x-rays have revealed but different from what we see today.

Given these facts, one might conclude that the portrait's present state is the result of a nineteenth-century repainting, made after the dispersion of the Orléans collection. Even though most of the face (with the exception of the forehead, which has been slightly raised) did not undergo significant change, nor the clothing, the hat, even the landscape—the alterations made are still extensive enough to distort decisively our perception of the painting. It is not possible, therefore, to arrive at any well-founded opinion about its authorship. The x-ray perhaps reveals certain similarities—in the painting's restless, sketchy, vibrant handling—to Romanino's *Portrait of a Nobleman* (Allentown Art Museum), but not enough to establish a firm connection between the two works. Moreover, the smooth, flat application of the few really legible



Fig. 98. F.-J. Dequevailler, *Le Duc Valentin*, by Antonio Correggio, in *Galerie du Palais Royal* by J. Couché, vol. 1, plate 55. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Watson Library



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passages in the Stockholm *Portrait* does not entirely agree with Dosso's customary execution. The painting is thus hesitantly ascribed here to our artist because the weight of scholarly opinion supports that attribution, but it is hoped that a new series of scientific analyses or a restoration removing all superfluous additions will eventually enable us better to experience the portrait's particular style.

ML

1. Campori 1870, p. 344; 1689 inventory, no. 43. The painting's later vicissitudes have been reconstructed by Grate in Stockholm 1966, p. 477, and by Waterhouse 1966, pp. 372–75.
2. Attribution of the work to Girolamo was supported by Berenson (1932, 1936), Sirén (1933), Lechi and Panazza (in Bergamo 1939), Nicodemi (1939), Gilbert (1959), Karling (1965), Grate (in Stockholm 1966), Gibbons (1968), Shearman (1979); and in Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (1939, 1958, 1990). The assignment by Gregori (1955) and Longhi (1956) to Dosso then won the support of Ferrari (1961), Puppi (1964), Mezzetti (1965a), Berenson (1968), Shapley (1968), Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), and Nova (1994b). Among those undecided between Dosso and Romanino were Bossaglia (1963), who related the painting to the *Man in Armor* (Isaac Delgado Museum, New Orleans), a work typical, in my opinion, of Romanino; and Shearman (1992).
3. For new dating of these works of Titian, see Joannides 1991, pp. 374–82; Lucco 1996, p. 79.
4. Karling (1965) maintained that the hat medallion is very similar to, if not a copy of, the lost medal that Benvenuto Cellini executed in Florence in 1528, perhaps from a design by Michelangelo, for the Sienese Girolamo Marretti. From this he surmised that the portrait was of Marretti himself and should be dated about 1530, an opinion that has proved of little consequence and in any case is contradicted by the stylistic factors, which suggest a considerably earlier date.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting's condition is good, although there is some abrasion in the dark areas. It has recently been cleaned. The picture was previously cropped, particularly on the bottom, and then enlarged to its present dimensions. The thread count is 25–26 per centimeter vertically and 25–27 per centimeter horizontally.

Numerous pentimenti are visible in the x-radiograph. The original hat was much smaller, more like a beret, and seems to have had a crest similar to the larger one now visible. The present large-brimmed hat formerly came down farther



Fig. 99. X-radiograph of *Portrait of a Man* showing changes to hat, beard, sleeves, and landscape

on the left. The proper right eye seems to have been changed, and the beard has been reduced. Originally the proper right shoulder came down farther and the sleeve was wider; subsequently the sleeve was narrowed with two broad strokes of a color containing a substantial amount of lead white. There is a cloudy area on the proper left shoulder that extends under the hat up to the level of the ear. In the x-radiograph a group of three buildings can be seen to the right of the tower, and between the tower and the subject's beard the skyline was farther down; also, an object that looks like a sword is visible in the lower left corner.

The rendition of the hands, made visible in the x-radiograph, is not usual for Dosso: the brushstrokes are very broad and without definition. It is also apparent from the x-radiograph that the hands were cut off on the bottom. A black border all around the edge, done recently, is painted over the area of the cropped hands. Under this border there may be remnants that were originally black. The handling of the trees is atypical, with very broad brushstrokes and highlights on the leaves not as well defined as in other Dosso landscapes. The buildings show characteristic vertical brushwork.

(Some technical information from John Rothline, Chief Conservator, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.)

Dosso Dossi (?)

45. *Portrait of a Man*

Once believed to be the image of Cesare Borgia—like so many early cinquecento portraits of gloomy mien and vaguely romantic temperament—this painting can be traced back only as far as 1849, when it was mentioned for the first time in the Villot catalogue of the Louvre collections. Although its identification with several works cited in seventeenth-century inventories has been proposed, no concrete evidence in support of these claims has yet been produced. For example, Gibbons (1968) maintained that it was the painting listed in 1661 under the name “Dossy” in the collection of Cardinal Mazarin and described as a portrait of a man in a gray hat with a seal in his hand;¹ but Béguin (1970) pointed out the obvious, that in this painting the hat is black and the man holds the hilt of a sword in his hand, with no seal anywhere to be seen. Marilyn Aronberg Lavin later suggested that it be identified with a Dosso portrait cited in three consecutive inventories of the collection of Cardinal Antonio Barberini, in 1644, 1671, and 1672.² All three descriptions have in common the mention of a hat with a medallion; the first also notes “a small collar open in front, one can see the shirt, clothing all of black.” The two later documents give the height of the painting as 3 *palmi*; Romani has pointed out³ that, since a Roman *palmo* is 22.3 centimeters, the picture would be about 67 centimeters high, or one-third shorter than the present painting. Then, the “small collar open in front” is not too likely to mean a white shirt closed over the chest, while the description of a garment “all in black” ignores the rather showy addition of a fur collar.

Classified as “Venetian school” by Villot and later by Seymour de Ricci (1913), as “school of Sebastiano del Piombo” by Hautecoeur (1926), and as the work of Calisto Piazza by Berenson (1932, 1936), the picture was first attributed to Dosso by Longhi (1956), who wrote that “this splendid example . . . barely suffers in comparison even with Giorgione.” For Longhi, it belonged rather early in Dosso’s career, at a time not too distant from prototypes by the Venetian

master. With Longhi’s attribution accepted, the painting was exhibited in 1960 in a show of works from the Louvre’s storerooms; there it was studied by Puppi, who (1964) declared it very close stylistically to the figures decorating the ceiling of the library in the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trent—thus, dating about 1530–32. This opinion convinced Gibbons (1968, 1968a), who placed the painting with a very heterogeneous group consisting of the *Portrait* in the Bergsten Collection, Stockholm, today attributed to Parmigianino,⁴ the *Portrait of a Woman* in the Musée Condé, Chantilly, and the *Portrait of a Soldier* in Cambridge (cat. no. 47). Gibbons explained that around 1530 or shortly thereafter, Dosso became interested in creating brighter spatial effects and larger, more aggressively sculptural figures than he had before.

Ballarin (in Paris 1993) deserves credit for re-situating the painting late in the second decade and in a more consistent critical and stylistic context. He pointed out that with the influence of Raphael now pushed into the background, the Paris portrait, while still in the Giorgionesque vein of the Stockholm *Portrait of a Man* (cat. no. 44), explores a different area as well, entering into perfect mental and stylistic harmony with the developments of Titian’s “courtly” portraiture of the late 1510s as exemplified by the so-called *Humanist* (Hampton Court) and the Frick *Portrait of a Man in a Red Cap* (fig. 100). The ideal of humanity these paintings explore is one in which the highest personal qualities—beauty of soul, intensity of feeling, intelligence in personal bearing and worldly relationships—are not the hard-won result of deliberate effort but rather are innate, natural, effortless. These are the goals of the world described by Castiglione in his much-admired *Book of the Courtier*, a work that may have been known in Venice through Pietro Bembo as early as 1518,⁵ although it was published (also in Venice) only in 1528.

Ballarin also correctly noted that the sitter’s costume does not permit a date for the portrait much past 1520; and other factors also support that time frame. The diagonal pose, giving the sense of

Ca. 1518–20
Oil on canvas, 37½ × 30¼ in. (95 × 77 cm)
Musée du Louvre, Paris,
Département des
Peintures

Provenance
Musée du Louvre,
Paris (by 1849)

References
Villot 1849, no. 520; Ricci 1913, p. 185; Hautecoeur 1926, no. 1646; Berenson 1932, p. 447; Berenson 1936, p. 384; Longhi 1956, p. 190; Paris 1960, no. 162; Puppi 1964, p. 32; Mezzetti 1965a, p. 106; Gibbons 1968, pp. 110, 133, 193; Gibbons 1968a, pp. 23–24; Béguin 1970, p. 59; Richardson 1970, p. 310; Brejon de Lavergnée and Thiébaut 1981, p. 173; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 410–14; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 77–86, 313–14

spatial depth; the cross current of light that accentuates it, casting the shadow of the neck onto the fur collar and picking out an architectural element from the background darkness; the arched, forward extension of the face, which seems poised, listening to the viewer; in short, the desire to establish connecting threads between the closed world of the painting and the real world of the viewer, recall Titian's so-called *Vincenzo Mosti* in the Palazzo Pitti, a painting that, if it is indeed a likeness of the Ferrarese nobleman, may well have been executed during Titian's stay in Ferrara in 1519.⁶ Other even stronger parallels might be drawn to male portraits by Palma Vecchio, such as the *Portrait of a Man in an Ermine Coat* (Staatliche Museen, Berlin) or the *Portrait of a Man with Gloves* (Hermitage, Saint Petersburg), which are earlier than the rather overripe half-length female figures of the early 1520s.

Clearly, Dosso could easily have become familiar with these paintings during his Venetian sojourns of 1518 and 1519. The real question, however, is whether this Paris portrait is really the work of Dosso. Its splendid execution—the softness of the fur and graphic rendition of the beard, the minute folds of the shirt and shadowed tension of the hand—does not quite fit with any of the other portraits catalogued here, except, perhaps the *Portrait of an Old Man in a Fur Collar* (cat. no. 46).

All the same, this painting is a very serious candidate for inclusion among Dosso's works. First, the vibrant softness with which the light marks all the chance variations in the hand's wrinkled skin finds very close technical equivalents—despite a different stylistic context—in the Hampton Court *Saint William of Aquitaine* and certain of the rhomboids in Modena, such as the face of the man crowned with vine leaves in *Drunkenness* (cat. no. 26c). The beard with its rather subtle calligraphy is reminiscent, once again taking into account certain stylistic differences, of the beards of the Pitti *Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 66) and its counterpart *Saint George* (cat. no. 8). The modeling of the face has parallels from quite separate moments of Dosso's career, for instance in the *Saint Jerome* of the Costabili polyptych (1513–14; cat. no. 6) and the already mentioned *Saint William* of Hampton Court (ca. 1524).



Fig. 100. Titian, *Portrait of a Man in a Red Cap*. © The Frick Collection, New York

Thus, though not confirmed by any fully convincing documentation, the attribution of this portrait to Dosso seems very credible. It marks a moment of his intense fascination with Venetian painting, particularly Titian's. Indeed, once Dosso had completed the great altarpiece for Sant'Agostino, Modena (fig. 6), the most fervent phase of his friendship and exchange with the great Venetian painter must have begun, sealed by the two artists' journey together to Mantua in November 1519.

ML

1. Cosnac 1884, p. 300, no. 984.
2. Lavin 1975, pp. 164, 294, 483.
3. In Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 313–14.
4. The attribution was suggested by Keith Christiansen in 1984; see London 1984, p. 88.
5. Castiglione sent a revised version of the text to Bembo in 1518; see Ghinassi 1967, pp. 155–96, especially pp. 178–79. Although Bembo was living in Rome at the time, he probably informed his Venetian friends about it immediately. In any case, following the death of his father on May 28, 1519, he came to Venice on June 2 and stayed until April 1520.
6. On the identification of the sitter, see Lazzari 1952, pp. 173–75.



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DOSSO DOSSI (?)

46. *Portrait of an Old Man in a Fur Collar*

*Ca. 1520
Oil on canvas,
28½ × 25¾ in.
(71.4 × 65.6 cm)
Private collection, Milan*

*Provenance
Saibene collection, Milan*

*References
Ballarin in Paris 1993,
p. 414; Ballarin 1994–95,
pp. 85–86, 313*

Entirely without a critical history, this painting emerged for the first time in 1993, when Ballarin connected it with the *Portrait of a Man* in the Louvre (cat. no. 45) and the so-called *Poet* in Wichita (cat. no. 49), hypothesizing that this splendid portrait too was from the period around 1519. Titian's masterly chromatic effects of that decade appear to unfold before us in the painting's thrilling atmospheric luminosity and play of tone against tone, between the whites of the beard and the shirt or in the soft density of the fur collar. The effects of light are subtly studied: it gleams on the studs, the ring, the gold chain; it reflects off the sleeve, just as in the Wichita portrait it reflects off the sharp edges of the leaves and the edge of the shirt collar. The sitter's frontal pose, which might have

created a flattening effect, has been offset by the addition at the lower edge of a parapet, which gives a sense of depth; it was painted over the man's cloak, perhaps by the artist himself. Ballarin (in Paris 1993) could not identify the object held in the sitter's hand, although later (1994–95) he thought it might be a rifle, comparing it to the one in the *Man in Armor* by Sebastiano del Piombo at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. In fact, it is probably a commander's staff, although there is no indication what military or civilian authority the staff confers.

The picture has some conservation problems, especially in the green background, which was restored a few years ago. On the other hand, the entire figure is in good condition. The painting lay-

ers are uniformly very thin, with no brush marks in relief or any trace of revision beside the added parapet. This characteristic links it again to the Wichita portrait; both portraits are thus distinguished from the majority of Dosso's works, in which the application of the paint is much more textured, full of dense areas and revisions. Both portraits have green backgrounds, although with different color values, and in both paintings carmine is used on the cheeks, mouth, and eyes. The treatment of the fur here can be compared to that in the Louvre portrait (cat. no. 45), but the faces in these two paintings are handled

quite differently, with the one in Paris being much more clearly delineated.

In spirit the portrait is indubitably Dosso's and rather similar to the *Portrait of a Man* (cat. no. 48) or some of the figures in the Modena rhomboids (cat. no. 26). It stands quite apart from all these paintings, however, in its technique, which is unlike that in any of Dosso's sure works of about 1520. The portrait's attribution to him thus remains a problematic one for this writer, even though as things now stand, no viable alternative can be offered.

ML

DOSSO DOSSI OR GIROLAMO DA CARPI (?)

47. *Portrait of a Soldier*

This painting belongs to a series of works about which it is difficult to say whether they should actually be called portraits or—in terminology that only gained currency two centuries later—"character heads." For it is difficult to imagine one of the German mercenary soldiers (lansquenets) who came down to fight in the wars that raged in Lombardy during the second and third decades of the sixteenth century having the time and means to have his likeness immortalized by a well-known painter. But the impression made in the Po River valley by those tremendously effective mercenaries, fearsome in combat, fascinating and exotic in dress, is well documented in a series of paintings, drawings, and prints—including Dosso's *Standard Bearer* (cat. no. 13)—that have preserved their image for the ages.

In the last century, the names of a romantically famous hero of those wars and of a romantically mysterious painter were linked to this anonymous portrait. When it surfaced as part of the Henry Smith Wright collection in Farnham, England (by 1878), the painting bore an attribution to Giorgione and the sitter was identified as the great young warrior Gaston de Foix, duke of Nemours, who died prematurely securing victory against papal and Spanish forces at the Battle of Ravenna. In 1929 the work was sold, still bearing the name of Giorgione.

Smith Wright believed that the painting had once belonged to the Orléans collection in Paris and had come to his family when that collection was dispersed in the 1790s. Since the work was engraved in Rome in 1770 by Felice Polanzani, however, that seems extremely unlikely. Gibbons (1968a) suggested instead that it is the picture numbered 437 in the inventory of the collection of Cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga at Villa Paolina, Rome—a "painting 4 *palmi* and 9 *once* in height, three and a half *palmi* wide, representing a portrait dressed in a cuirass, half figure, on canvas, by Dossi of Ferrara."¹ That is about 43 by 31 inches, and thus one would have to figure that the painting's height was later considerably shortened, by about 10 inches; yet the present proportions of the canvas are reflected in the engraving.² Furthermore, the portrait does not appear in any of the three paintings, all by Gian Paolo Panini and his school, that depict the items of the Valenti Gonzaga collection before they were moved to Villa Paolina,³ nor in either of the two catalogues of the sale of the collection. Whether it belonged to that collection therefore remains *sub judice*.

Suida published the painting in 1954 as a work by Dosso—the first such attribution. Ten years later, Antonelli Trenti described the picture, with its "liquid colors that seem to drip on the silky thickness of the clothing and the florid hilt," as

Ca. 1520–25
Oil on canvas,
 $33 \times 29\frac{1}{4}$ in.
(83.8×74.3 cm)
Fogg Art Museum,
Harvard University Art
Museums, Cambridge,
Massachusetts

Provenance
Possibly Cardinal Silvio
Valenti Gonzaga, Villa
Paolina, Rome (1756 inv.,
no. 437); Henry Smith
Wright collection,
Aveley Wood, Farnham,
England, as by Giorgione
(by 1878); Smith Wright
sale, Robinson, Fisher,
and Harding, London
(November 7, 1929, no.
189, as by Giorgione);
Frederick Mont, New
York; Edwin Hale
Abbot (from October
1949); on deposit

at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (late 1950s–early 1960s); donated to the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge (1966)

References

Suida 1954, p. 166;
Antonelli Trenti 1964,
p. 409; Mezzetti 1965a,
p. 104; Berenson 1968,
p. 110; Gibbons 1968,
pp. 132–33, 169; Gibbons
1968a, pp. 19–25;
Fredericksen and Zeri
1972, p. 67; Freedberg
1978, pp. 390, 391–92;
Bowron 1990, p. 330;
Ballarin in Paris 1993,
pp. 392, 406–7, 408;
Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 66,
311–12

supposedly representative of a movement by Dosso in about 1515 away from the “chromatic classicism” of Titian and back to a stirring “neo-Giorgionism”—and thus to an atmospheric realism that was of Lombard inspiration. At the same time Dosso had in mind the noble formality of Raphael’s portraits. For Antonelli Trenti, the Cambridge portrait documents Dossi’s adherence to an artistic climate found across the entire Po valley in the years about 1515–20, in which painters experienced “the uneasiness and limitations of formal classical balance.”⁴

However in 1965, Mezzetti, citing an opinion of Longhi’s, attributed the painting to the so-called “Friulian friend of Dosso” (Amico Friuliano del Dosso), a hypothesized master whose oeuvre was assembled by Longhi in 1960 around the celebrated *Dead Christ* in the Monte di Pietà, Treviso, and the *Portrait of a Warrior* in a private collection.⁵ But this idea had no sequel: Gibbons (1968a), studying the present work on the occasion of its bequest to the Fogg Art Museum, took it back to Dosso but dated it about 1530 because of its stylistic affinities with the *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* in Vienna (cat. no. 27) and the Della Sale altarpiece in Rome (fig. 76). In addition, according to Gibbons, the sitter’s attire, more gay and varied than that seen in Dosso’s early portraits, shows a trace of the influence of French fashion, which was brought to Ferrara by Renée of France on her marriage to Ercole II in 1529. This attribution and date convinced Berenson (1968), Fredericksen and Zeri (1972), Freedberg (1978), and Bowron (1990).

On the other hand, Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) maintained that the work should be dated considerably earlier, about 1517–18, thus isolating it as almost the key point (together with the Stockholm *Portrait*, even though the two differ somewhat) of an extraordinarily extroverted moment—one that grew out of the Venetian basis of Dosso’s style but was imbued with an eccentric, anticlassical mood. Ballarin noted that the color, so “sumptuous” yet “full of nocturnal seduction,” is similar to that in Dosso’s *Adoration of the Magi* in London and in *Melissa* (cat. no. 12); a coloration still, he believes, connected to Giorgione, with the red of the large hat here serving the same chromatic function as the red in the so-called *Impassioned Singer* (Galleria Borghese, Rome), which he attributes to Giorgione.

Indisputably there is a generically Dossoesque

expressivity in this portrait, making it a serious candidate for attribution to the master himself. If, however, it is compared to the Stockholm painting (cat. no. 44), which is different in style, technical application, and execution, it must be acknowledged that the two works are too dissimilar to be included in the oeuvre of a single artist. Only one of them, or perhaps neither, is by Dosso. Even though abrasion of the surface hampers our attempts at a definitive reading of this painting, the differences between the two works are clearly apparent.

In the present painting, several factors argue against recognizing the hand as Dosso’s. First, a twilight light creates a coherently nocturnal tone that is unlike anything we know by the Ferrarese master and perhaps has more in common with painting in nearby Brescia. The darkened, hazy air, in which the contours of forms lose their clarity and tend to be rendered in vibrating, tiny touches, is quite different, for example, from the dense, oily compactness composed of large strokes that characterizes another seminocturnal portrait, in the Uffizi, which Ballarin (1994–95) links by authorship and date to this work. Nor can the meticulous “natural” articulation of the atmospheric shadow be compared to anything in the Stockholm *Portrait*, which is constructed in a much simpler, more abstract manner, with broad areas of color and the pervasive use of touches of white to provide luminous relief. In the Stockholm work the sitter seems to rest his elbow on the edge of the wall, whereas in this painting the man is well inside the room, far from the window in the background and closer instead to an unseen window, the painting’s actual source of light. While the overall effect in the Stockholm portrait is of a certain brilliant flatness in diffused light, the Cambridge painting seems built up slowly and densely. Indeed, the application of paint is instructive; the former work has a thin film of paint, and highlights picked out with small brushstrokes; the latter has a more compact, robust density to the color. Even the prominence given the two landscapes differs, and as for their conceptions and technical approaches, one could hardly imagine a greater discrepancy. In the Stockholm portrait, the ochre buildings are intensely highlighted with white in a kind of violent repetition of small strokes; in the present work, the view is seen at the hour of darkness, the greenish-blue houses barely stand out against the mountain, and the luminous touch revealing their edges is not in pure white



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Fig. 101. Attributed to Girolamo da Carpi, *Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints Monica and Francis*. Church of The Misericordia, Bologna

but in a lighter version of their same color. The leafy branches in the Stockholm portrait are bright and shiny, their yellow and light green strokes like fireworks against the dark mass of the trees; in the Cambridge painting they are all an earthy green, well distinguished from one another but with no relief from light at all. In vain would one search for buildings, branches, meadows, and hills like these in any of Dosso's confirmed oeuvre. Thus they reveal themselves to be the work of another, less refined hand, although one that has here achieved a virtuosic tour de force.

Other facts point to the same conclusion. In this painting the sitter's eyes, cast in shadow, look dark, completely empty, lost in the distance as if in reverie, despite tiny points of white on both irises. They are quite unlike those in any other portrait attributed to Dossi, where the eyes are made to seem alive and intensely engaged with the observer by means of far more visible touches of white at the point where the light is refracted on the pupil. And while in comparison to the Stockholm painting, with its close connection to Titian, the Cambridge portrait seems generally less refined and intelligent, it is much more attentive to a rendering of optical "reality." Especially

in the landscape, it displays an awareness and offers an original reformulation of the liveliest experiments of Correggio, from the *Christ Taking Leave of His Mother* at the National Gallery in London to the *Adoration of the Magi* at the Brera in Milan.

If, then, this *Portrait of a Soldier* cannot be attributed to Dosso, who could have painted it?

The characterization and proportions of the sitter's face suggest the style of Garofalo; indeed, a comparison with the *Holy Family* (Museo Civico, Padua), dated about 1523–24, is quite revealing.⁶

However, a closer parallel can be found in the *Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints Monica and Francis* in the Church of the Misericordia, Bologna (fig. 101), with its similar twilight atmosphere and heads with the same dark, rather empty eyes. The correct attribution of this splendid altarpiece is almost certainly to the young Girolamo da Carpi,⁷ who painted it at the same time that he executed the frescoes in the sacristy of nearby San Michele in Bosco (Bologna), documented in 1525. Girolamo, a Ferrarese painter, was the son of Tommaso da Carpi, who is documented to have had long-standing work contacts with Dosso's studio. As is well known, Vasari (1568), a personal friend of Girolamo who obtained information for his *Vita* at first hand, recalled that the artist was a pupil of Garofalo and was still working at his studio in 1520. While still very young Girolamo went to Bologna, where, "having made some portraits very striking in their likeness, he won much esteem." Then he moved on to Modena and Parma to study the works of Correggio; only after his return to Bologna in 1525 was he commissioned to do the frescoes in San Michele in Bosco.⁸

This portrait may well be one of the very early Bolognese portraits made by Girolamo da Carpi, datable about 1521 or 1522, which have not hitherto been identified; they would establish Girolamo as a new, original voice in the panorama of Emilian painting of that period. Despite Gibbons's idea about the garment reflecting a French fashion introduced in Ferrara only in 1529, the sitter's costume, with its very broad hat and a cap below in which a soldier's long hair was gathered up, was of a type very much in evidence toward the end of the second decade of the cinquecento and pictured, for example, in the frescoes of Altobello Melone, Romanino, and Pordenone, painted in the nave of the cathedral of Cremona in 1518, 1519, and 1520. The light breastplate is of a kind that one begins to encounter

about 1515, and similar two-handed swords were already being produced in the 1490s. The padded jacket with stripes of alternating color is also typical of the 1510s and could easily have carried over into the early 1520s. Finally, one may note, but without giving the detail too strict a chronological value, that a very similar “German-style” shirt, with a black border and embroidery around the neck, is worn by Marsilio Cassotti in the painting by Lorenzo Lotto at the Prado dated 1523, and by the man in the *Married Couple* by the same artist at the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, datable to 1524.

ML

1. “Quadro di palmi 4., once 9. per altezza, e palmi 3., e mezzo per larghezza, rappresentante un Ritratto vestito in Corazza, mezza figura, in tela, del Dossi di Ferrara.” Pietrangeli 1961, p. 57.
2. Ballarin 1994–95, p. 311.
3. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseilles; Casita del Principe, Escorial.
4. Grassi 1950, p. 148.
5. Longhi 1960, pp. 3–9.
6. Pattanaro in Padua 1991–92, pp. 139–40. That the painter of this work came close to Dosso’s orbit is demonstrated by the two-handed sword, since the same unusually shaped weapon, with fringes in the same place, appears in Dosso’s altarpiece *Madonna and Child in*

Glory with Saints George and Michael at the Galleria Estense in Modena (fig. 6).

7. Lucco forthcoming.

8. Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 5, p. 414). For the documents of 1520 and 1525 cited, see Mezzetti 1977, pp. 52–53.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting, which is very abraded, was last restored in 1949. Its condition makes it extremely difficult to read. The thread count is 16 per centimeter horizontally and 22 per centimeter vertically. The canvas consists of two pieces stitched together. No cusping or imprints from a strainer are visible. Orpiment was probably used for the yellow areas of the tunic. The x-radiograph and an infrared photograph reveal a number of pentimenti: the hat was originally smaller (although the circular shape visible in the x-ray is hard to interpret); both hands, as well as the handle of the sword, have been moved; the tunic originally flared out farther to the left.

DOSSO DOSSI (?)

48. *Portrait of a Man*

A painting of intense emotionality despite the utter austerity of its pictorial means, this portrait was published and attributed to Dosso by Roberto Longhi in 1956, when it was in a private collection in Paris. The attribution is confirmed by two tags glued onto the reverse: one, clearly an auction label, reads “Italian school no. 10560. Portrait of a Man,” and the other reads “Portrait of a Man—Dosso Dossi—Supposed portrait of Christopher Columbus./21.”¹ These were recovered from the original panel before it was thinned and glued onto another panel, apparently of oak, which was then cradled, in a restoration done before 1968. Three vertical cracks visible on the painted surface do not seem to have worsened in recent years.

Longhi’s attribution was accepted by Mezzetti (1965a), who called the painting “the most suggestive . . . of the Giorgionesque portraits attributed by Longhi to Dosso,” and by Gibbons (1968), who dated it to the mid-1520s and recognized the influence of Titian’s portrait style of about 1520 or shortly thereafter. Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95) concurred and placed the picture with the sequence of Dosso works running from the *Saint William of Aquitaine* at Hampton Court (ca. 1524) to the Della Sale altarpiece of 1527 (fig. 76), a group dominated by the new mode of painting brought from Rome to Northern Italy by Raphael’s pupil Giulio Romano when he relocated to Mantua in 1524.

Ca. 1525
Oil on panel, 24 5/8 x 18 1/4 in. (62.5 x 46.5 cm)
Private collection

Not in exhibition



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Provenance

Private collection, Paris;
Neger, Paris

References

Longhi 1956, p. 190;
Mezzetti 1965a,
pp. 106–7; Gibbons 1968,
pp. 130, 188; Ballarin in
Paris 1993, p. 417; Ballarin
1994–95, pp. 93, 342

Although the man portrayed is dressed in black and placed against a black background, and his eyes are hidden beneath a protruding brow, no melancholic Giorgionesque shadow envelops him. On the contrary, the painting seems to declare that type of pictorial experience to be at an end. Its archaizing composition, with a perfectly frontal pose comparable to that of the *Portrait of an Old Man in a Fur Collar* (cat. no. 46) (perhaps more Florentine than Venetian or Ferrarese in origin), was probably chosen precisely to emphasize the immobility of the sitter, whose intense face, gaunt and suffering, is bisected by a ruthless, airless light. Even the treatment of the surfaces has an abstract quality and a metallic sheen that connect the work with certain of

the Modena rhomboids (paid for in 1522), especially with the figure holding a glass and wearing vine leaves in his hair in the panel called *Drunkenness* (cat. no. 26c). That metallic polish, which vibrates with the light, should also be seen in connection with Giulio Romano's influence, as was first suggested by Ballarin.² There are parallels as well with the tondo from the Camera del Poggiolo, executed by Dosso between September 1524 and January 1526 (cat. no. 32). In the fragment of the tondo now in London, the treatment of the face of the middle-aged man embracing the young woman crowned with jasmine compares very closely with that of the anonymous subject here. This portrait is therefore a most serious candidate for attribution to Dosso.

Nothing in the painting helps us establish the sitter's identity. The name Christopher Columbus, cited in the label on the reverse, cannot reasonably be invoked, since the features of this man are entirely different from those in other paintings reputed to represent the Genoese navigator (of whom no certain iconography exists). Nor has any connection between Dosso and Columbus ever been demonstrated. It is possible that the painting

portrays someone from the Ferrarese court, but the clothing provides no firm basis even for this conjecture.

ML

1. "École Italienne no. 10360. Portrait d'Homme";
"Portrait d'Homme—Dosso Dossi—Portrait présumé
de Christophe Columb./21."
2. Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 418.

DOSSO DOSSI OR CAMILLO BOCCACCINO (?)

49. *Portrait of a Man with a Branch of Laurel*

This painting's powerful romantic charm, stemming from the crepuscular light, the sitter's intense expression, and the little laurel branch held in his hand, has inspired a nickname, *The Poet*, which is still in use as a title today. Yet a poet's attribute is actually a crown of laurel, not a branch of the sort this man extends toward the viewer. The gesture of offering, further accented by the sitter's direct gaze, accords with the increasing early-sixteenth-century tendency to involve the viewer in an overtly expressed relationship with the work of art.¹ Indeed, in this changing milieu the plant itself might have assumed a new significance, something other than celebration of the perennial glory of victors and poets. Laurel was also associated with ideas of eternity, immortality, and constancy;² here it may symbolize a pledge of eternal love made by the man we see to his beloved, the intended recipient of the portrait. In this context the painting's sober chromatic range, moving between the green of the background and the black of the man's garment, would take on a precise meaning. A sonnet written about 1500 by Nicolò da Correggio declares, "Si como il verde importa speme e amore / . . . / Fermezza il nero e in cor melanconia" (Just as green means hope and love / . . . / So black is steadfastness, and melancholy in the heart).³ An entire scenario thus begins to take shape in which the sitter, depicted as vaguely depressed (or, in sixteenth-century terms, melancholic) because of his lady's unresponsiveness, but nevertheless firm

in his convictions, offers her his undying love in hopes that it will be returned in kind.

A 1565 *Dialogue* by Ludovico Dolce confirms such an interpretation, not only by giving the color green the exact same semantic meanings as the sonnet (although by that time the color black had partially lost its earlier meaning) but also by including, among gifts to be offered to the beloved, laurel and myrtle: "These are fragrant. They shall thus signify a fine, loving couple, well paired, who emit a pleasant, healthy fragrance. The laurel may also be interpreted as labor: that is, in amorous involvements one must toil hard, and do all one can, day and night, to win the object of one's love."⁴

The subject of this portrait is, then, not a poet but a man in love. With an elegance at once cultivated and natural, and with persuasive emotion, he enacts before our eyes a ritual that must have been very familiar to his contemporaries, living as they did in an age that prized refinement.

The painting was formerly attributed to Gianfrancesco Bembo (ca. 1480–1543, active in Cremona) by such scholars as Fiocco, Raimond van Marle, Mason Perkins, Suida, and Longhi, in written communications to the owner, Samuel H. Kress. But in 1956 Longhi published it as a work by Dosso, giving it the title *Il Poeta*. He asserted that this portrait, as well as others, could legitimately have been included in the Dosso section of the exhibition "Giorgione e i giorgioneschi" held in Venice in 1955, probably implying that the work

Ca. 1527–30
Oil on canvas, 22 1/2 ×
16 1/2 in. (57.2 × 42 cm)
Wichita Center for the
Arts, Samuel H. Kress
Collection

Provenance
Contini Bonacossi,
Rome; Samuel H. Kress,
New York (from 1930);
Wichita Center for the
Arts (from 1937)

References
Longhi 1956, p. 190;
Mezzetti 1965a, p. 125;
Gibbons 1968, p. 264;
Shapley 1968, p. 76;
Fredericksen and Zeri
1972, p. 67; Ballarin in
Paris 1993, pp. 407,
413–14; Ballarin 1994–95,
pp. 66, 84–85, 313



Fig. 102. Detail (head of King David) from Camillo Boccaccino, *The Prophets Isaiah and David*. Organ shutters, oil on canvas. Museo Civico, Piacenza

belonged to the period when Dosso was still under the influence of Giorgione, before his involvement in Mannerism. This position persuaded Mezzetti (1965a) but not Gibbons (1968), who linked the canvas to the Stockholm *Portrait of a Man* (cat. no. 44) and maintained that both were works of about 1529 by Girolamo Romanino (1487/88–1560/62, active in Brescia), mostly because their surfaces have so little texture. Shapley (1968) prudently described the painting as “attributed to Dosso,” while others, from Fredericksen and Zeri (1972) to Ballarin (in Paris 1993; 1994–95), reasserted his outright authorship. In a particularly fascinating and complex interpretation, Ballarin reads the work as, on the one hand, a revival of Giorgionesque portraiture of about 1505 (recalling, for instance, Giorgione’s *Double Portrait*, Palazzo Venezia, Rome), and, on the other, a meditation on Raphael’s *Castiglione* (Musée du Louvre, Paris)—with even an awareness evident of Titian’s “courtly” portraits of about 1520. He thus dated the portrait about 1519 and described it as part of a “circle of patronage at or close to the court whose members wanted to be shown possessing a manner of inborn, natural courtesy illuminated by the light of the soul, and entirely without affectation.”⁵

Still, as Gibbons (1968) correctly pointed out, the technique of the portrait makes it very unlikely that it was painted by Dosso. There is none of the dense, energetic application of paint, often built up with thick impasto and through broad, swift brushstrokes, that is so typical of the artist’s work, especially at the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century. Instead the paint is applied thinly, sparingly, nearly impalpably, particularly in the hairs of the beard and the fur collar, so that the entire image seems almost to dissolve in subdued light. At several points, notably along the hairline at the right, the weave of the canvas is apparent beneath the paint layer; between the hat and the proper right shoulder parallel to the beard, a pentimento is visible. The paint application appears particularly liquid in the highlights on the leaves and on the thin edge of the collar.

Therefore, this portrait, whose modes of execution are so inconsistent with Dosso’s customary techniques, can be attributed to him only if we regard it as a single experiment, entirely without precedents or successors. Gibbons notwithstanding, its approach does not even correspond, in my opinion, to that of the Stockholm *Portrait*.

It does, however, have substantial points in common with the characteristic work of Camillo Boccaccino (1504/5–1546), a painter who, like Dosso, had gone to Venice to learn a more modern style.⁶ After studying with Titian in Venice, Camillo returned to his native Cremona but continued to remain attentive to the more compelling artistic voices in neighboring regions, including that of Dosso, who had, about 1525–26, sent an altarpiece of Saint Sebastian to the nuns of the Annunciata in Cremona (fig. 8). Unfortunately, comparisons with this elusive Cremonese master must be based on only a few works. In typology and style, the present portrait corresponds rather well to the holy warrior on the extreme right of Camillo’s 1527 altarpiece for Santa Maria del Cestello in Cremona (Národní Muzeum, Prague), which M. Gregori, not surprisingly, considered “Dossesque.”⁷ Even closer is its technical affinity with the great organ shutters painted in 1530 for Santa Maria di Campagna in Piacenza (fig. 102), particularly in the face of King David there. One encounters exactly the same thin, liquid application of paint and the same manipulation of light, down to the prophet’s completely shaded eyes. What appear from afar to be dense highlights on the prophet’s garment reveal themselves from



close up as having been painted with a diluted color, light and very thin.

The shutters seem to have been executed later than the portrait, however, although both are part of Camillo Boccaccino's journey toward an independent, original style, a journey that would ultimately lead to quite abstract results in the frescoes in San Sigismondo, Cremona (1535–37). One must conclude, therefore, that the portrait should be situated somewhere in the middle of the artist's career, prior to the Prague altarpiece and the Piacenza shutters.

ML

1. Shearman 1992, pp. 10–58.
2. Levi D'Ancona 1977, pp. 201–4.
3. Bertoni 1919, p. 221.
4. "Questo sono odoriferi. Significheranno adunque bella coppia d'amanti, e bene unita; la quale porge di se buono odore, e sana. Potrassi anco interpretare Lauro quasi lavoro: come a dire, che nelle trame amorose è uopo affaticarsi, e fare giorno e notte ogni cosa per acquistare la cosa amata." Dolce 1565, pp. 11v, 19v–22v, 42v.
5. Ballarin 1994–95, p. 85.
6. Cf. Gregori in Cremona 1985, pp. 117–26.
7. Ibid., p. 121.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is in good condition, with only small pinpoint losses of color and one horizontal tear above the sitter's proper right shoulder; it was restored in 1997. The preparation appears to be dark gray underneath the figure and almost black in the background. The green of the background is abraded on the left but well preserved on the right. There is no evidence of dabbing in the glazes.

There are a number of pentimenti. Infrared examination reveals that the composition originally included painted leaves and a salamander or lizard in the background, subsequently painted out in green. Another pentimento appears in the laurel leaves, whose form and position were slightly changed. The yoke and collar of the costume have been altered, and it is possible that a medal originally hung around the sitter's neck on a ribbon. A quite visible pentimento shows that the curved edge of the hat was slightly tightened by the artist; but Mezzetti's assertion (1965a, p. 125) that "the brim of the hat was made in a revision" is without foundation.

(Report compiled by Elisabeth Mention,
J. Paul Getty Museum.)

Paintings by Battista Dossi

Numerous documents that relate to Dosso's work for Duke Alfonso indicate that the artist made extensive use of workshop assistance from the very beginning of his career at the Ferrarese court. Before about 1520, however, these assistants were apparently employed chiefly on large-scale decorative projects, including frescoes, which are now lost. Thus, the bulk of the work that survives from the first decade of Dosso's activity may be accepted as autograph, that is, entirely by him. But, from the time Dosso painted the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece for Modena Cathedral in 1518–21 (fig. 1), there are increasing signs of workshop collaboration even in his easel paintings, and accompanying this development is the growth of the number of pictures that are unmistakably Dossesque in style but that do not appear to have been painted, or even designed, by the master.

It is surely no accident that this change corresponds to the moment when Dosso's brother Battista entered the workshop. Battista was apparently younger than Dosso by at least ten years, and it is recorded that in January 1520 he was in Raphael's workshop in Rome. His presence in Dosso's shop is at first difficult to detect; but by the end of the 1520s it seems that he was assuming an increasing number of responsibilities in the running of the shop and playing an increasingly significant role in the execution of Dosso's pictures. Yet scholars remain sharply divided when it comes to assessing the extent of Battista's participation in any specific example of Dosso's later work, or to identifying independent works by the younger of the brothers. That is because not a single picture exists that is known with certainty to have been painted solely by Battista, except for those made after Dosso's death in 1542. An apparent exception is the *Votive Nativity*, completed in 1534 (Galleria Estense, Modena), that the contemporary chronicler Lancellotti specifically described as the work of Dosso's brother (see p. 13); yet even in this case there are good stylistic arguments for believing that Battista was not the sole executant

and that Dosso made a significant contribution to the splendid landscape on the right. Nor is it possible to arrive at an adequate understanding of Battista's own artistic personality purely on the basis of the works he is known to have painted between 1542 and his own death in 1548, despite the fact that during this period he continued to receive important commissions both from Duke Ercole II and from Laura Dianti, former mistress of Duke Alfonso (see entries for cat. nos. 53, 54). Part of the problem is that works like the *Allegory of Justice* of 1544 (fig. 11) suggest that during this late phase, Battista's own not inconsiderable talents were in decline and he was producing pictures rather different from his best work. Furthermore, having been accustomed to work as part of a team throughout his professional life, Battista evidently made use of shop assistants himself, as is clear from, for example, the stylistically alien landscape background of a late work, *Cleopatra* (private collection),¹ which documents indicate he painted for Laura Dianti in 1546.

The small group of five pictures catalogued here, to which may in essence be added *Saint George and the Dragon* of 1540 (cat. no. 43), is presented partly to demonstrate that Battista had qualities of his own, distinct from Dosso's, and that at his best he was capable of producing work of considerable originality and fascination. But an even more important reason, in the present context, for including these paintings is to derive insights from examining them that may make possible the identification of Battista's hand in pictures largely by Dosso, in particular those datable to the late 1520s and early 1530s. Sometimes Battista is recognized as the principal author of a large-scale figure; most easily by distinctively rendered facial features, as is the case with the Saint Joseph in the Capitoline *Holy Family* (cat. no. 33). More often, Battista's collaboration is detected in the landscape: either in broad vistas, like the background of Dosso's *Hercules and the Pygmies* (cat. no. 40), in which the Flemish-inspired morphology is very close to that in Battista's own *Martyrdom of Saint*

Stephen (cat. no. 52); or in areas of foliage, as in the Turin *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 36), the Hampton Court *Holy Family* (cat. no. 37), and the Borghese *Mythological Allegory* (cat. no. 39), where the linear, delicate touch resembles that

in Battista's *Battle of Orlando and Rodomonte* (cat. no. 50) and clearly differs from the more robust and impulsive approach of Dosso.

PH

I. Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 1, fig. 237.

BATTISTA DOSSI

50. *The Battle of Orlando and Rodomonte*

Ca. 1527–30
Oil on canvas, $32\frac{1}{4} \times 53\frac{3}{8}$ in. (81.8×135.7 cm)
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford,
The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund 1949-81

Provenance
Possibly Palazzo Ducale, Modena (by 1657); possibly Cesare Ignazio d'Este, Palazzo Ducale, Modena (1685 inv.); possibly Galleria Ducale, Modena (before 1720 inv.); William Graham, London (by 1882; his cat., no. 223; his sale, Christie's, London, April 10, 1886, no. 477); possibly B. T. Clifford; earl of Brownlow, Belton House, Grantham (by 1894–1929); sale, Christie's, London (May 3, 1929, no. 4); F. Howard; Thos. Agnew and Sons, London (1931); Oskar Bondy, Vienna (1933); Bondy sale, Kende Galleries, New York (March 3, 1949, no. 92, as by Dosso); bought by the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford (1949)⁵

Despite its phenomenal public success, Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando Furioso* was not often taken as the subject of paintings.¹ Dosso must have known Ariosto well, since the two were colleagues at the Ferrarese court; Dosso and Battista are even mentioned in the 1532 edition of the poem, which contains a list of the great artists of the modern age (xxxiii:2). Furthermore, as has often been observed, there was unquestionably a close temperamental affinity between the poet and the painter, who shared a taste for romance and enchantment combined with a sense of ironic wit. Yet even Dosso painted very few pictures whose subjects were unambiguously Ariostean (for exceptions, see cat. nos. 12, 21); therefore the present picture, a rare and early example that faithfully illustrates an episode from the poem, is of particular interest. At the same time, its very literalness provides a strong argument for attributing the picture not to Dosso himself but to Battista.

The subject is drawn from Canto XXIX, lines 39–48. Rodomonte, the Saracen king of Algiers, had previously converted an abandoned chapel in the south of France into a mausoleum for Isabella, a Castilian princess whom he had first fallen passionately in love with and then inadvertently slain. Beside the mausoleum he ordered a tower built for himself; across a nearby river he had a bridge constructed. If a knight approached, pagan or Christian, Rodomonte jousted with him on the bridge and when he had prevailed, hung the vanquished man's shield and weapons on the walls of the mausoleum. One day Orlando, naked and mad with jealous love for Angelica, approaches the bridge. Disdaining to attack a naked man with lance or sword, Rodomonte seeks to prevent Orlando's advance by wrestling with him on the

bridge, but both warriors tumble into the deep river below and have to swim to safety. The painter has depicted the struggle on the bridge as the main subject. To the left Rodomonte's tower is still under construction, as Ariosto says; at its entrance stands Rodomonte's charger, dripping wet from having fallen into the river during a previous contest; and beside it is a turbaned servant who holds the king's lance. Clearly represented in the middle ground are the chapel and Isabella's mausoleum hung with the arms of defeated knights, while in the background are a French city and, to the right, the Mediterranean Sea, which Rodomonte planned



50, detail



50

to sail across to return home to Algiers. As was pointed out by Langmuir (1981), the picturesque, even comic mixture of styles and modes—for instance, the contrast between a neomedieval knight in shining armor and a heroic nude *all'antica*, and that between the Renaissance architecture of Rodomonte's tower and the spiky Gothic city in the background—is completely in the spirit of Ariosto's poem.

In 1657 a detailed description of a picture in the collection of the duke of Modena representing this very subject was given by Francesco Scannelli, who called it as work by Dosso.² The picture had presumably come to Modena from Ferrara with the rest of the Este collection. It was then record-

ed in inventories of 1663, 1685, and about 1720,³ as well as at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Baruffaldi's biography of the Dossi.⁴ But, calculating the dimensions provided by the 1685 inventory to be equivalent to 228 by 303 centimeters, Cadogan (1991) pointed out that the Modenese picture was considerably larger than the present work, even taking into account the fact that this one has clearly been cut at all four edges and that the dimensions noted may have included the frame. Cadogan agreed with Mezzetti (1965a) that the Hartford work is probably one of the at least three replicas Scannelli observed in Ferrara and Rome. But, using a different method of conversion, Romani (in

References

- Benson in London 1894, pp. xxx, 18; Gruyer 1897, vol. 2, p. 283; Mendelsohn 1914, pp. 133–34; Phillips 1915; A. Venturi 1928, p. 971; Barbantini in Ferrara 1933, p. 169; Fumagalli 1933, pp. 291–93; A. Venturi 1933, p. 389; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 86, 87, 120); Buscaroli 1935, p. 216; Bodmer 1943, p. xxxix; Antal 1948, p. 87; Arslan 1957, p. 261, n. 8; Mezzetti

1965a, pp. 91–92; Turner 1965, pp. 67–68; Berenson 1968, p. 112; Gibbons 1968, pp. 128–29, 182–83; Fredericksen and Zeri 1972, p. 67; Mezzetti and Mattaliano 1980–83, vol. 2, p. 174; Langmuir 1981, p. 145; Kaplan 1982, p. 13; Cadogan 1991, pp. 137–41; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 335–36

Ballarin 1994–95) calculated the dimensions given in the 1685 inventory as equaling only 191 by 235 centimeters, and while those still define a work considerably larger than the Hartford picture in its present condition, she concluded that the two paintings may after all be identical. Consistent with this conclusion is Cadogan's own observation that the picture shows a number of pentimenti, suggesting that it is not a replica but an original.

Most modern critics have rightly found the pictorial execution too precisely descriptive to be the work of Dosso himself. But the obvious alternative attribution to Battista, first proposed by Benson (in London 1894) and recently accepted by Ballarin (1994–95), has not won universal favor. For example, Fredericksen and Zeri (1972) ascribed the painting to an anonymous follower of Dosso, while Gibbons (1968) thought it might be a Flemish copy after Dosso. A Flemish element is certainly very evident, not just in the pedantic tightness of the paint handling and the high vantage viewpoint but even in particular details of the panoramic landscape, such as the Gothic city and the distant windmills. Admittedly, these features are not entirely characteristic of Battista; but the archaic use of touches of gold on the Moor's turban and sash, the horse's saddle, and the shields suggests that the painter was aiming at a special effect of refinement and preciousness, perhaps with the intention of evoking the courtly tradition of book illumination. If this hypothesis is accepted, the style of the picture seems not incompatible with that of apparently typical works by Battista datable to the early 1530s, such as the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen* (cat. no. 52) and the *Coral Gables Flight into Egypt* (fig. 14), with their similarly Netherlandish panoramas. By this time Battista had moved away from the more densely wooded and broadly painted landscapes of the *Holy Family* paintings in Cleveland (ca. 1520; fig. 64) and Chapel Hill (ca. 1530; cat. no. 51); on the other hand, he had not yet arrived at his fully mature style of the mid-1530s, exemplified by the altarpiece made for Portomaggiore (fig. 12). If it was indeed painted about 1527–30, *Orlando and Rodomonte* is chronologically close to Dosso's *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38), the background landscape of which is generically similar but much more dynamic and powerful in effect. This dating would also place the painting close to late works by Ludovico Mazzolini, like *Christ Among the*

Doctors of 1524 (Staatliche Museen, Berlin) or the probably slightly later *Massacre of the Innocents* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), which might well have inspired the fantastic Renaissance architecture of Rodomonte's tower, especially the polygonal balcony with its crowded narrative relief sculpture.

PH

1. See Lee 1977.

2. Scannelli 1657, p. 317.

3. See, respectively, Bentini and Curti 1993, p. 64; Campori 1870, p. 318; A. Venturi 1882, p. 313.

4. Baruffaldi 1697–1722 (1844–46 ed., vol. 1, p. 280).

5. Information on provenance from Cadogan 1991.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting is in very good condition and was restored in 1987. The canvas consists of two vertically butt-joined pieces of linen. The painting seems cut on the sides and especially at the top, since the figure on the balcony is cropped; this is confirmed by an old strainer mark close to the top edge.

Cross sections show a dark ground composed of oil with lead white, charcoal brown earth colors, and a high proportion of extenders, a clay mentioned by Vasari and Armenini. Other sections taken through the intense green area have been very revealing, showing two distinct layers divided by a layer of varnish. The lower layer was built up first with lead-tin yellow and lead white, then with verdigris, lead white, and lead-tin yellow; finally it was glazed with lead white and verdigris. The layer on top of the varnish is a mixture of lead-tin yellow, lead white, and some verdigris. The discovery of what is probably a layer of resin or oil/resin in the green grass confirms that the Dossi used a technique described by Armenini (see pp. 60, 63) that is responsible for the spectacularly well-preserved greens in Ferrarese paintings. The blue pigment used here is azurite, which often appears in the Dossi's paintings. There is an orpiment-realgar mixture in Rodomonte's red cloak and in one of the coats of arms hanging on the wall. An orange-red glaze on top of the orpiment of the cloak shows faint fingerprints, and there is evidence of cloth dabbing in the green of the trees.

The x-radiographs and cross sections show numerous changes, including ones to the entrance of the castle and the niche above and to the wooden planks on the bridge. The details are rather pedantic, which is not the case in Dosso's own paintings, and the trees do not have his typical highlights. Many of the details in the foreground, such as Rodomonte's

chain mail and the ornaments on the horse, are highlighted with shell-gold, which is not usual for Dosso. The stonework of the castle is incised.

(For the cross sections, see the report by Barbara Berrie, Scientific Department, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., September 2, 1988, and Berrie and Fisher, 1993.)

BATTISTA DOSSO

51. *Holy Family with the Infant Baptist*

Although occasionally attributed to Dosso, this delightfully fresh interpretation of the Nativity theme is usually and more plausibly given to Battista.¹ The motif of the huge sun emerging from the clouds obviously derives from similarly dramatic celestial phenomena in the work of the elder brother (see figs. 6, 7); yet certain features are entirely characteristic of Battista, among them the puffy treatment of the flesh, the awkwardly articulated poses, and the monotonously regular fingers of Joseph's right hand. At the same time, foreground details—the fur lining of the Baptist's cloak, the gold fringes on the Child's sheet, Joseph's hair and beard—are rendered with exceptional delicacy and show the sometimes prosaic Battista at his very best. X-radiographs reveal that during the execution minor alterations were made to the background landscape, but, as is usual with Battista, the contours of the figures remained unchanged. The scroll held by the angel on the right bears the opening words of the angelic hymn to the Nativity of Christ, "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

Ballarin dated the picture to about 1518–19, implicitly linking it to works by Dosso that he had dated to about 1519, such as the Borghese *Nativity* (cat. no. 17) and the *Virgin and Child in Glory with Saint George and Michael* (fig. 6), which have similar throngs of jubilant angels. But the poses of these angels by Battista, in particular the one on the left with outstretched, radically foreshortened arms, are much more complex than those in the just-named paintings by Dosso. Even taking it into account that Battista would have had contact with developments in Rome more recent and direct than Dosso's, 1518–19 seems much too early a date for the present work. More likely to have been painted by Battista

in that period is the Cleveland *Holy Family with Shepherd* (fig. 64); and evidence that Battista's figure style retained its explicitly Raphaelesque character for the next few years is provided by such works as the *Virgin and Child with the Infant Baptist and Saint Francis*,² datable to the early 1520s. In the Chapel Hill picture, however, the references to Raphael are more completely absorbed, and there is now also a reflection of works by Dosso datable to the later 1520s. Particularly to be noted is the geometric subdivision of the background between dark elements that act as foil—the hut and trees on the left—and a bright distant landscape on the right. The composition may be compared with that of Dosso's *Venus and Cupid* of about 1525 (cat. no. 29) and his *Saint Jerome* of about 1528 (cat. no. 36). A possible date for Battista's painting might be about 1530.

A variant of the composition, attributed to Battista by Ballarin but conceivably by another close follower of Dosso, appeared on the London art market in 1994.³

PH

c. 1530
Oil on panel, 23 1/8 x
15 1/4 in. (58.9 x 38.9 cm)
Ackland Art Museum,
University of North
Carolina, Chapel Hill,
Ackland Fund 85.22.1

Provenance
Otto Mündler (by 1870);
Ivor Guest (later Lord
Wimborne), Canford
Manor, Dorset (by 1888);
Wimborne sale, Christie's,
London (March 9, 1923,
no. 13); sale, Christie's,
London (November 21,
1952, no. 61); R. W. Lloyd,
London (Lloyd sale, May
29, 1959, no. 63, as by
Dosso); Morris I. Kaplan,
Chicago; sale, Sotheby's,
London (June 12, 1968,
no. 29); Colnaghi,
London (autumn 1969,
no. 1); Herner Wengraf,
London; Matthiesen,
London (1984); acquired
by the Ackland Art
Museum, Chapel Hill
(1985).⁴

1. See Mezzetti (1965a), Gibbons (1968), Ballarin (1994–95).

2. At most recent mention, on the London market; see Ballarin 1994–95, fig. CXXIX.

3. Formerly in the collection of the marquess of Lansdowne; sold, Christie's, London (July 8, 1994, no. 21). As suggested in Ballarin 1994–95, p. 320, this picture, rather than the one in Chapel Hill, is probably the one recorded in the Costabili collection in Ferrara in the early nineteenth century. Elements from both compositions recur in a third, considerably weaker version, sold at Finarte, Milan (May 15–16, 1962, no. 46); see Ballarin 1994–95, p. 321.

4. Information on provenance from Ballarin 1994–95 and from museum files.



TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting's condition is very good, except for some paint loss in the upper right-hand corner. The panel is formed from two pieces of wood joined together, with two fir crossbattens, presumably original. The reds and blues are painted over a modeled lead white substrate, perhaps with some pigment mixed into it. The angels are executed in pink over white, and the large sun is painted over a thick layer of lead white or lead-tin yellow. The white areas must be painted primarily with lead white, since no other pigment has the density or opacity to x-rays that they demonstrate. Saint Joseph's cloak is most likely done with orpiment.

There are areas of distinct dabbing with a cloth in the blue robe and red gown of the Virgin. Saint Joseph has white eyelashes; his hair and the Virgin's are carefully detailed. The x-radiograph revealed no changes, a fact that agrees with the conclusion drawn from other paintings that Battista was not inclined to alter his compositions radically, as Dosso did. Also typical of Battista are the carefully painted, detailed depictions of the ox and donkey, including the hay in the donkey's mouth.

(Some information from Bernie Rabin, Condition Report, Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, June 24, 1985.)

References
Anderson in Mündler 1855–58 (1985 ed., p. 34); Catalogue of Pictures 1888, p. 28; Benson in London 1894, p. 17; Mendelsohn 1914, p. 215; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 43, 126; Berenson 1968, p. 110; Gibbons 1968, pp. 126, 227–28; London 1984, p. 90; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 320

BATTISTA DOSSI

52. *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen*

The subject is taken from Acts 7:58–60, in which the deacon Stephen is stoned to death outside the walls of Jerusalem, becoming the first Christian martyr. According to the biblical account, the saint "kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"; he is accordingly shown looking up to a bright patch of sky in the top left corner. The youth seen in back view in the immediate foreground is Saul—the future Paul—to whom the executioners assigned the care of Stephen's clothes. As Hale (1990) pointed out, the portrayal of biblical soldiers as contemporary foot soldiers derives from German prints and is used here to lend topical immediacy to the scene.

The figures' small scale in relation to the panoramic landscape was also clearly inspired by northern art, in this case Netherlandish painting, particularly the works of Patinir and his school, which were much in demand at the courts of Ferrara and Mantua.¹ Although it cannot be established with certainty that any surviving work by Patinir was in Ferrara, his *Martyrdom of Saint Catherine* of about 1514 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) is likely to be the one Marcantonio

Michiel noted in the Grimani collection in nearby Venice in 1521;² and it may be no accident that the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen* has much in common with this painting in terms of both composition and motif. As in Patinir's picture, the martyrdom, seen in small scale, takes place on a rocky platform in the foreground; a Gothic city with towers and spires, on the edge of the sea, is represented beyond it to the left; vertical, rocky mountains are prominent in the landscape; busily active figures appear in the middle ground and background; and the landscape recedes through zones of brown, green, and blue to a distant horizon.

It is generally recognized that Flemish-inspired panoramas of this type were Battista's particular contribution to the Dosso workshop; thus, although the picture is sometimes attributed to Dosso himself on the basis of its high quality, particularly the sensitive treatment of light, a majority of critics have rightly followed Longhi (1934) in giving it to Battista. The date of about 1527–30 recently suggested by Ballarin (1994–95) may be slightly too early. The landscape background was certainly painted later than Battista's more purely

Ca. 1530–35
Oil on canvas, 31 1/2 × 35 3/8 in. (80 × 90 cm)
Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Provenance
Possibly Cardinal Alessandro d'Este, Rome (1569–1624; 1624 inv.); or possibly Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi (1623 inv. no. 17; 1633 inv. no. 138); possibly Falconieri collection, Rome (by 1717); Gottschewski, Berlin; Ruth Nottebohm, Hamburg (by 1965); New York art market (1968); Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection (from 1977)



52

References

Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 87); Mezzetti 1965a, p. 71; Berenson 1968, p. 115; Gibbons 1968, pp. 135, 241; Ekserdjian in London 1988, pp. 54–55; Hale 1990, p. 247; Ballarin 1994–95, p. 353

Dossesque landscape in the *Holy Family with the Infant Baptist* of about 1530 (cat. no. 51), but it seems more mature than that of the already more Flemish *Battle of Orlando and Rodomonte*, datable to the later 1520s (cat. no. 50), making a date in the early 1530s, close to that of the Portomaggiore altarpiece of about 1535 (fig. 12), more likely.

It has usually been assumed that the present picture is the one described as “a landscape with the stoning of Saint Stephen by the hand of Dossi” in the 1624 posthumous inventory of the collection of Cardinal Alessandro d’Este in Rome.³ Some of the cardinal’s pictures were subsequently sent to Modena, while others remained in Rome in the possession of his niece Giulia d’Este. But, as was pointed out by Romani (in Ballarin 1994–95), it is equally possible that the picture corresponds instead to “a martyrdom of Saint Stephen three

palmi high in a gilded frame by the hand of Dossi,” recorded in 1623 and again in 1633 in the inventories of Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi.⁴ This work may also be the one that was later in the Falconieri collection in Rome and hung in the church of San Salvatore in Lauro on the feast day of the Holy House in 1717.⁵

PH

1. Buscaroli 1935, pp. 55–58.

2. For Michiel’s description of the Grimani collection, see Frimmel 1896, p. 102; the Vienna picture is the only known representation of this subject by Patinir.

3. “Un Paese con la lapidazione di S. Stefano di mano del Dossi.” Campori 1870, p. 61.

4. “Un martiro di San Stefano alto tre palmi con cornice dorata di mano del Dossi.” See Wood 1992, p. 517, no. 17; Garas 1967, p. 345, no. 138.

5. See the detailed discussion in Ballarin 1994–95, p. 353.

BATTISTA DOSSI

53. *Venus and Cupid*

The attribution of this picture to the mature Battista, first made by Mendelsohn (1914), now seems to have won general acceptance, despite a history of dissenting views. Mezzetti (1965a), for example, considered it the work of an anonymous member of Dosso's workshop dating from the late 1540s at the earliest. The painting that provides the most obvious point of comparison, compositionally and stylistically, is one of the very few documented independent works by Battista, *Allegory of Justice* (fig. 11), for which the painter was paid in March 1544.¹ This picture, like *Venus and Cupid*, is dominated by a female figure set against a distant landscape. In both works a calculated contrast is maintained between, on the one hand, highly wrought surfaces and an almost pedantic attention to foreground detail, and, on the other, a hazily atmospheric background in which spiky Gothic buildings cluster around a huge rock. The planar, stiffly metallic billow of Venus's cloak in this Philadelphia picture, as well as the still-life treatment of the assembly of objects in the foreground, may also be compared with similar elements in Battista's *Allegory of Peace*, which was painted as a pendant to the *Justice* and hangs beside it in the Dresden Gemäldegalerie.

Many of these features characterize Battista's style in general and are already to be found in his production of the 1530s, including the work he contributed to pictures mainly by Dosso. As it is in *Hercules and the Pygmies* (cat. no. 40) of about 1535, for example, the decorative silhouetting of the tree trunk and foliage in the left foreground here is combined with a cityscape of obviously Flemish inspiration in the right background; and in both pictures, the transition from foreground to background is marked by a dark bluff, behind which are half seen, almost comically, the heads and weapons of soldiers on the march. Yet the physical type that Venus represents, long of limb and oval of physiognomy, does not correspond to Battista's female ideal in the early to mid-1530s as exemplified by the Virgin in the documented *Votive Nativity* of 1534 (Galleria Estense, Modena) and by her counterpart on the Portomaggiore altarpiece, probably of about the same date

(fig. 12).² It does, however, conform very closely to that of the two allegorical figures of 1544 in Dresden, which also, like Venus, have elaborately braided hair. The dearth of certain dates for Battista's works between 1534 and 1544 makes it difficult to know when this revision of his ideal type occurred, but it probably is reasonably related to a closer association with Girolamo da Carpi, his fellow painter for the Ferrarese court, after Dosso's death in 1542. Gibbons (1968) and Schaefer (1978) have both plausibly argued that *Venus and Cupid* must precede the Dresden *Justice* and *Peace*, which are more formulaic and academically charmless in character; and these scholars accordingly proposed, respectively, dates of about 1540 and about 1534. But, for the reasons just given, Schaefer's date in particular seems much too early; and *Venus and Cupid*, which is in any case a smaller and thus more intimate picture, may precede the Dresden pair by only about a year or two.

Although there is no need to suppose, as Turner (1966) does, that the landscape in the right background of *Venus and Cupid* was actually painted by a visiting Netherlandish painter, Turner was right to draw attention to a disturbing disjunction between that area, with its atmospheric softness, and the seascape on the left, which is depicted with the same sharply focused precision as the foreground. Even though in Dosso's shop Battista seems to have been regarded as something of a landscape specialist, the evidence of his own work—including *Saint George and the Dragon* of 1540 (cat. no. 43) and *Cleopatra* of 1546 (private collection)³—suggests that he sometimes employed other painters to execute the background landscapes. It may be that an assistant was entrusted with the seascape of *Venus and Cupid*, and perhaps with other subordinate passages as well.

A further indication that the picture dates from after 1542, when Battista no longer had the support of his elder brother, is provided by the composition's close dependence on an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi (fig. 103) (the same is true for the 1544 *Night*, cat. no. 54). Rudolf Wittkower (1938–39), who first pointed out the connection, identified the subject of both the engraving and

Ca. 1542–43
Oil on canvas, 61 3/4 x
50 in. (157 x 127 cm)
Philadelphia Museum of
Art, William L. Elkins
Collection

Provenance
George Salting, London;
Lord Rochdale, London;
Sir George Donaldson,
London; Gladys Lloyd
Robinson, New York and
Los Angeles; Timken-
Robinson-Astor sale,
Parke-Bernet, New York
(October 19, 1960, no.
12); acquired by the
Philadelphia Museum of
Art (1972)¹⁰

References
Berenson 1907, p. 209;
Mendelsohn 1914,
pp. 142–44; A. Venturi
1928, p. 997; Wittkower
1938–39 (1977 ed., p.
139); Antal 1948, p. 93;
Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 104–5;
Turner 1966, pp. 144–45;
Gibbons 1968, pp. 8, 111,
142, 218–19; Berenson
1968, p. 112; Schaefer
1978, pp. 12–24



Fig. 103. Marcantonio Raimondi, *Venus and Cupid, or Peace*. Engraving (Bartsch xiv. 393, 296). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949 (49.97.137)

Battista's painting as the reconciliation of Minerva and Cupid, on the basis of verses appended to a copy after the engraving that dates from about 1550. This interpretation is arguably acceptable for the engraving, in which Cupid proffers an olive branch, a common attribute of Minerva; yet even there, as Tervarent pointed out,⁴ it is much more likely that the branch symbolizes reconciliation between Cupid and his mother, Venus, after one of their many disputes, and that the author of the mid-sixteenth-century verses was simply mistaken.

With Battista's painting there is all the more reason to identify the principal figure as Venus, since here Cupid wears his quiver and brandishes his customary arrow. Furthermore, as Tervarent also pointed out in relation to the engraving, the figure's gesture of exposing and pressing her breast is much more appropriate to the goddess of love than to the virginal goddess of wisdom, as numer-

ous analogous examples attest.⁵ It is comparatively unusual, however, for Venus to be shown draped, but Schaefer plausibly explained this and other unusual features in allegorical terms, suggesting that the picture alludes to marriage. Thus, according to a program presumably devised by some court humanist, Venus is shown clothed with bridal modesty but ready to be disrobed before her nuptial bed. Her jeweled belt is a reference to the girdle she gave Juno to bless her marriage with Jupiter. Venus clasps Cupid's hand in a gesture of restraint, as if to prevent him from extinguishing an already kindled passion with his blunt lead-tipped arrow. The trunk of the evergreen laurel tree on the left is entwined by evergreen ivy, symbolizing, in keeping with an emblem described in Alciati's *Emblematum Liber*, eternal love.

Schaefer went on to suggest that the marriage alluded to was the clandestine ceremony supposedly enacted between Duke Alfonso and his mistress Laura Dianti shortly before his death in October 1534. The laurel leaves would then also be a pun on Laura's name, as they were in the earlier *Apollo* (cat. no. 28). Schaefer further saw in Venus an idealized portrait of Laura, like the idealized portrait of Duke Ercole that the *Hercules and the Pygmies* (cat. no. 40) represents. But comparison with the best-documented portrait of Laura, that by Titian in the Kisters collection, Kreuzlingen, shows this last suggestion to be less than convincing;⁶ and, as is argued above, Schaefer's dating of the *Venus and Cupid* to as early as about 1534 is not convincing either. His observations on marriage symbolism, on the other hand, cannot be so easily dismissed; and it remains possible that even a decade after Alfonso's death Laura wished to assert the legitimacy of their relationship—widely doubted by the outside world—and thus also the legitimacy of their sons Alfonso and Alfonsino. Battista was certainly the favored painter of Laura's household: it was she, for example, who commissioned the *Cleopatra* from him in 1546,⁷ and it was Alfonsino who presented him with the gift of a silver dagger with an ivory handle in 1547.⁸

Mendelsohn (1914) tentatively suggested that the picture may be identical with "a *Venus and Cupid* by Dossi" sent from Ferrara to Modena in 1618.⁹ However, the reference to that work is too general to either confirm or disprove the suggestion.

PH



1. Document quoted in A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 223, no. CCCXXXIII, and in fuller detail in Mezzetti 1965a, p. 68. See Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 380.
2. For the authorship and dating of these works, see the biographical essay in this volume.
3. For the identification of this recently emerged *Cleopatra* with a picture painted by Battista in 1546, see Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 370–71. For the attribution of its landscape to another hand, see Lucco 1998.
4. Tervarent 1958, p. 18.
5. Gibbons (1968) accepted Wittkower's interpretation of the figure in the Battista painting as Minerva but also reported Erwin Panofsky's verbal statement that the gesture the goddess makes is more appropriate to Venus.
6. Schaefer also went so far as to suggest that the Philadelphia picture is identical with a portrait commissioned by Laura in December 1534. But that portrait may have depicted the recently deceased Alfonso rather than Laura herself, as Pattanaro suggested (in Ballarin 1994–95, p. 158); moreover, it was painted on wood rather than canvas. See the documents in Mendelsohn 1914, p. 207; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 279, 284.
7. Laura commissioned it as one of a group of four pictures for her Palazzo degli Angeli: see n. 3 above and Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 406. Battista executed numerous works for Laura in the late 1530s and the 1540s: see the summaries of documents in A. Venturi 1928, pp. 980–86; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 65–69; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 284, 313, 336.
8. “Una daga fornita d'arezento con lo manico d'avoglio bianco con li soi cottelli fornita de mano de m.^{ro} Bernardino Spadaro.” Document in A. Venturi 1928, p. 986; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 400.
9. “Venere con l'Amoretto di mano del Dossi, col suo Telaro dorato” (Venus and Cupid by Dosso, with its gilded frame). Document in A. Venturi 1882, pp. 39, 123.
10. Information on provenance from Schaefer 1978, p. 4.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

Although there are some abrasions in the sky and the background, and evidence of overcleaning in the past, the painting's condition is good. The canvas is made from two pieces of single-thread, plain-weave linen that have been butt-joined vertically. The strip of fine canvas holding them together was made nearly invisible by the application with a spatula of a thin layer of lead white. The paint layer is thick and there are some concentric cracks similar to those on certain paintings by Dosso, such as cat. nos. 38 and 41. The preparatory layer of the bottom half of the canvas seems dark gray, while that under the sky, the landscape, and the skin of Venus is light pink. Venus's red dress, painted over an off-white substrate, shows signs of dabbing with a cloth. The green garment, over a yellow substrate, also shows signs of dabbing.

In the x-radiograph, minor changes can be noted in the outlines of the shoulders, the limbs of the tree, and the landscape, and in the placement of the feet farther to the right. Many carefully delineated details are characteristic of Battista: individual hairs are painted over the fancy hairstyle; the finger- and toenails are carefully executed (although the drawing of Cupid's hands and feet is badly done); there are detailed figures wearing turbans in the background; and the gold border and the tassel on the red garment are painted in relief, but with little imagination.

(Some information from the Condition Report by Mark Tucker, Philadelphia Museum of Art.)

BATTISTA DOSSI

54. *Night*, also called *The Dream*

In this deliberately bizarre allegory, Battista was unusually successful in combining widely diverse sources of inspiration, both literary and visual, to evoke the troubled world of dreams and monstrous imaginings. As Mezzetti (1965a) demonstrated, the picture was painted early in 1544 as part of a series representing times of the day, to be placed above the windows in one of the “stanze nove de corte”—the newly appointed apartments of Duke Ercole in the Palazzo del Corte, facing the Via Coperta.¹ Two other pictures in the series were commissioned from Battista at the same time: *Dawn*, or *Hora with the Horses of Apollo*, also now in Dresden (fig. 104); and *Day*, or *Apollo in His Chariot*, now lost, but traced by Mezzetti in an inventory of the ducal collection in Modena of 1743.² Although Mezzetti assumed that there were never more than three paintings in the series, it is natural to wonder whether there was also a *Dusk*; and Weber plausibly suggested that the dusk painting was Garofalo’s *Diana and Endymion* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), a picture of very similar format and dimensions that, like *Night* and *Dawn*, formed part of the Este sale to Dresden in 1746.³ The chariot in the background of the Garofalo painting, which refers to Diana’s ascent across the skies with the advance of evening, also creates a link to the theme of *Day*; and its composition, a woman stooping over a sleeping man, makes the picture a highly effective pendant to *Night*, in which a man bends over a sleeping woman. In both *Night* and *Dusk*, the direction of the pictorial light is from the right, and in *Dawn* it comes from the left; however, without knowing more about the room and the position of its windows, it remains impossible to say whether *Night* and *Dusk* were intended to hang next to one another on the same wall, or opposite one another. It is recorded in an inventory of 1663 that after their transfer from Ferrara in 1618, the pictures were again placed over windows in their new setting in the ducal palace in Modena.⁴

The subject of *Night* has been analyzed in detail by Tervarent (1944) and Weber. The scene is reminiscent of the Land of Sleep described by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (xi:592ff.), with its “hollow

mountainside, the secret dwelling-place of languid Somnus, where the sun’s rays can never reach.” In this land “no crested cock summons the dawn with his wakeful crowings,” but “from the depths of the rocky cave flows the river of Lethe whose waters invite slumber as they glide.” Around the god of sleep “lie empty dreams, made to resemble different shapes.”⁵ The bearded old man in the foreground is clearly Somnus himself, accompanied by the owl, a bird of the night; to the right, “the crested cock,” which, according to Lucian’s *Verae Historiae* (ii:32), happens to be sacred on the Island of Dreams, is silently watchful.⁶ Just as he once did, fatefully, to the pilot Palindarus of Virgil’s Aeneas (*Aeneid* v:849–51), the deity sends the recumbent woman into a heavy slumber by sprinkling water on her from a sprig of foliage dipped into the river Lethe. Tervarent further suggested that the dramatic scene in the background showing a blazing city by a river was inspired by the description of a dream in a passage from a corrupt but widely dispersed edition of Statius’s *Thebaid* (112–13): “Vague dreams with innumerable faces are seen all around, the truthful ones mingled with untruthful ones and rivers with flames.”⁷ Again according to Tervarent, the nightmarish display of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic creatures in the foreground may be based on Lucian’s description of the inhabitants of the Island of Dreams (*Verae Historiae* II:34): “For as far as

1544
Oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x
58 7/8 (82 x 149.5 cm)
Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen,
Gemäldegalerie Alte
Meister, Dresden 131

Provenance
Duke Ercole II, Palazzo
del Corte, Ferrara
(1544–59); Palazzo
Ducale, Modena (from
1618; inv. 1663); Francesco
III d’Este, Modena
(inv. 1743; until 1746);
Augustus III, king of
Poland and elector of
Saxony, Dresden
(from 1746)

References
Boschini in Baruffaldi
1697–1722 (1844 ed., vol.
I, p. 283); L. N. Cittadella
1870, pp. 31–32; A. Venturi
1882, pp. 39, 313, 357;
Morelli 1891 (1893 ed.,
p. 141); Gruyer 1897,
vol. 2, pp. 261, 281;



Fig. 104. Battista Dossi, *Dawn*, or *Hora with the Horses of Apollo*. Oil on canvas. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

A. Venturi 1900, p. 36;
Berenson 1907, p. 208;
Gardner 1911, p. 167;
Zwanziger 1911,
pp. 108–9; Mendelsohn
1914, pp. 144–45;
A. Venturi 1928, p. 996;
Posse 1929, p. 65;
Berenson 1932, p. 174;
Barbantini in Ferrara
1933, pp. 167–68;
A. Venturi 1933, p. 390;
Longhi 1934 (1956 ed.,
p. 88); Richter 1937,
p. 259; Tervarent 1944,
pp. 290–94; Antal 1948,
p. 87; Battisti 1962 (1989
ed., p. 195); Mezzetti
1965a, pp. 49–50, 81;
Middeldorf 1965, p. 172;
Berenson 1968, p. 111;
Gibbons 1968, pp.
222–23; Calvesi 1969b,
p. 172; Benati in Modena
1986, p. 333; Aurenhammer
in Vienna 1987, p. 148;
Winkler 1989, p. 120;
Penny in Oxford, London
1990–91, p. 32; Weber in
Cologne, Zurich, Vienna
1996–97, pp. 202–3; Nova
1998

dreams go, these vary from one another, by their nature as well as by their appearance. Some bring before us figures which are beautiful and well proportioned, while others are small and ugly. Some appeared to me rich, while others were humble and resembled beggars. Among them were winged and sinister figures, and others were dressed in a ludicrous fashion, suggesting kings, gods and various other personages.”⁸ Weber relates these monsters instead to a passage in the *Metamorphoses* that follows the one quoted above (xi:633ff.) and describes how the many sons of Somnus invaded the dreams of men and women in the various forms of human beings, animals, birds, reptiles, rocks, water, and plants.

While its details are apparently drawn from a number of different literary sources, presumably conflated by a learned member of the Este court, the picture is probably not meant to illustrate any one narrative. Gibbons (1968) raised the possibility that it portrays the story of Hecuba, whose dream shortly before she gave birth to Paris was interpreted by soothsayers to mean that the child would eventually bring about the destruction of Troy. It is true that the portrayal of Diana and Endymion in Garofalo’s contribution to the series shows that mythological narratives could be drawn on to represent times of the day; and, if she is not Hecuba, Battista’s sleeping woman is in fact the only major figure in the set who is anonymous and purely allegorical. Nonetheless, Gibbons was certainly correct to conclude that the identification cannot be sustained, since the burning city is only one element in a picture packed with incidents, most of which have no particular relevance to the Hecuba story.



Fig. 105. Marcantonio Raimondi, *The Dream of Raphael*. Engraving (Bartsch xiv. 274, 359). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Henry Walters, by exchange, 1931 (31.31.2)

It was first pointed out by Richter (1937) that the most striking visual inspiration for *Night* was the celebrated engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi known, anomalously, as the *Dream of Raphael* (fig. 105). It provides a precedent, not just for the depiction of a sleeping woman surrounded by a dreamlike landscape, but for the full range of special effects: the eerie nocturnal lighting, the buildings on fire in the background, the reflections of flames and moonlight on water, the repulsive monsters that flap and waddle on the foreground bank. Marcantonio’s print, produced during his brief stay in Venice about 1506–8, was itself clearly inspired both by the pictures of Hieronymus Bosch known to have reached the city before that date and by the work of Giorgione. Some scholars argue, in fact, that the *Dream of Raphael* is a reproductive print faithfully recording a now-lost painting by Giorgione, who is himself known to have been keenly interested in Bosch’s fantastic monsters and infernal landscapes, where bright flames light up a dark sky. Whether or not such a painting by Giorgione ever existed, Battista, living in nearby Ferrara, could easily have had direct knowledge of Marcantonio’s Venetian sources as well as the print; in this connection, Mezzetti (1965a) pointed out that Battista visited Venice in the company of Doso as recently as June 1541. On that occasion he could have seen or renewed his acquaintance with, for example, Bosch’s *Three Hermits* and *Last Judgment* panels, now in the Doges’ Palace in Venice, which were noted in the collection of Cardinal Domenico Grimani in Venice in 1521 by Marcantonio Michiel.⁹ On the other hand, Battista’s female figure, unprecedented in his oeuvre for her heroic, almost masculine physique and the sculptural firmness with which she is represented, owes nothing to Giorgione, Bosch, or Marcantonio Raimondi. Here the inspiration is obviously Michelangelo; and, given the subject and the nature of the commission, it is probably no accident that the figure particularly recalls his already widely famous and frequently copied sculptures of reclining figures in the Medici Chapel of San Lorenzo in Florence—including the figure of *Night*, with her owl.

PH

1. According to a document of March 1544, Battista was paid for “haver depinto tri quadri sopra le fenestre de stanzie nove de corte del signor nostro cioè la Notte, l’Aurora et il Giorno a ducati otto l’uno” (having



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painted three pictures above the windows in our duke's new apartment in the Palazzo del Corte, that is, Night, Dawn, and Day, at eight ducats each). See Mezzetti 1965a, p. 81.

2. "Un quadro su cui il medesimo Tisi figurò Apollo guidato in un cocchio a due cavalli" (A picture in which the same Tisi represented Apollo in a chariot drawn by two horses). Inventory of 1743, quoted by A. Venturi 1882, p. 357, and Mezzetti 1965a, p. 81. This inventory records that also hanging in the same room in the ducal palace in Modena were *Night*, "Un quadro per traverso, sul quale miriamo dipinta una femmina con varj animali e mostri e in lontananza una città incendiata" (A horizontal picture on which we admire a woman painted with various animals and monsters, and in the distance a burning city), and *Dawn*. All three pictures were at this time attributed to Garofalo (Benvenuto Tisi). Also in the room was a true Garofalo, called a *Venus and Adonis* but certainly identical with the *Diana and Endymion*, sold to Dresden with *Night* and *Dawn* (but not *Day*) in 1746.
3. Weber in Cologne, Zurich, Vienna 1996–97, pp. 202–3. Garofalo's picture, measuring 37½ x 60½ inches, was dated to the early 1540s on stylistic grounds in Fioravanti Baraldi 1993, pp. 250–51; and external evidence now confirms that it is likely to have been commissioned and executed contemporaneously with the three by Battista in 1543–44.
4. In the 1663 inventory, *Night*, already with a mistaken attribution to Garofalo, is described as follows: "Un quadretto bislongo sopra le finestre depinto in tela da Benvenuto. Rappresenta un sogno. Con cornice dorata" (A small oblong picture above the window, painted on canvas by Benvenuto. It represents a dream. With a gilded frame).

Garofalo's *Diana and Endymion* is clearly the picture listed as the next item, although it is attributed to Girolamo da Carpi: "Un altro simile. Rappresenta la luna ed Endimione depinta in tela da Geromino" (A similar one. It shows Endymion and the moon, painted on canvas by Girolamo). Document in Bentini and Curti 1993, p. 60.

5. English translation from Ovid 1985, p. 262.

6. See also Tervarent 1958, cols. 97, 112.

7. Quoted in Tervarent 1944. The final words, *flumina flammis*, are a mistaken transcription of *lumina flammis*.

8. Ibid.

9. For these works and their presence in Venice, see Limentani Virdis in Venice 1992, pp. 75–101.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition is good, although the surface is rather dark and there is yellowed varnish on the painting. Unusually, the woman's dress is painted in a dark blue pigment without any colored substrate. The figure has pronounced toenails, and eyebrows but no eyelashes. Another atypicality is the way the foliage on the trees in the background is painted, with small vertical semicircles all aligned. But similar to other paintings by Battista and Dosso are the care and detail with which the owl and the rooster are painted, although the dark red crest of the rooster is executed directly over a black preparation.

Problematic Attributions: The Longhi Group

DOSSO DOSSI (?) OR ANONYMOUS
VENETO-FERRARESE PAINTER

55. *The Bath, also called A Bacchanal*

Ca. 1530
Oil on canvas,
42½ × 64½ in.
(108.5 × 163 cm)
Museo Nazionale di
Castel Sant'Angelo,
Rome 210/III

Not in exhibition

The first written mention of this painting occurs in a passage by Longhi (1927a), who recalled having seen about 1920, at the restorer Moroni's shop in Milan, a large painting of a Bacchanal that belonged, stylistically, with the series of works he himself grouped together and attributed to the early phase of Dosso's career (the series is often referred to as the Longhi group; see the biographical essay, p. 6, and the entry for cat. no. 56). Recognizing a relationship between this work and the Bacchanals painted by Titian for Alfonso d'Este, Longhi wondered whether it might not be the very same "Baccanaria d'uomini tanto buona" (very good Bacchanal of men) by Dosso that Vasari mentioned in his Life of Girolamo da Carpi as belonging to the duke's famous Camerino.¹

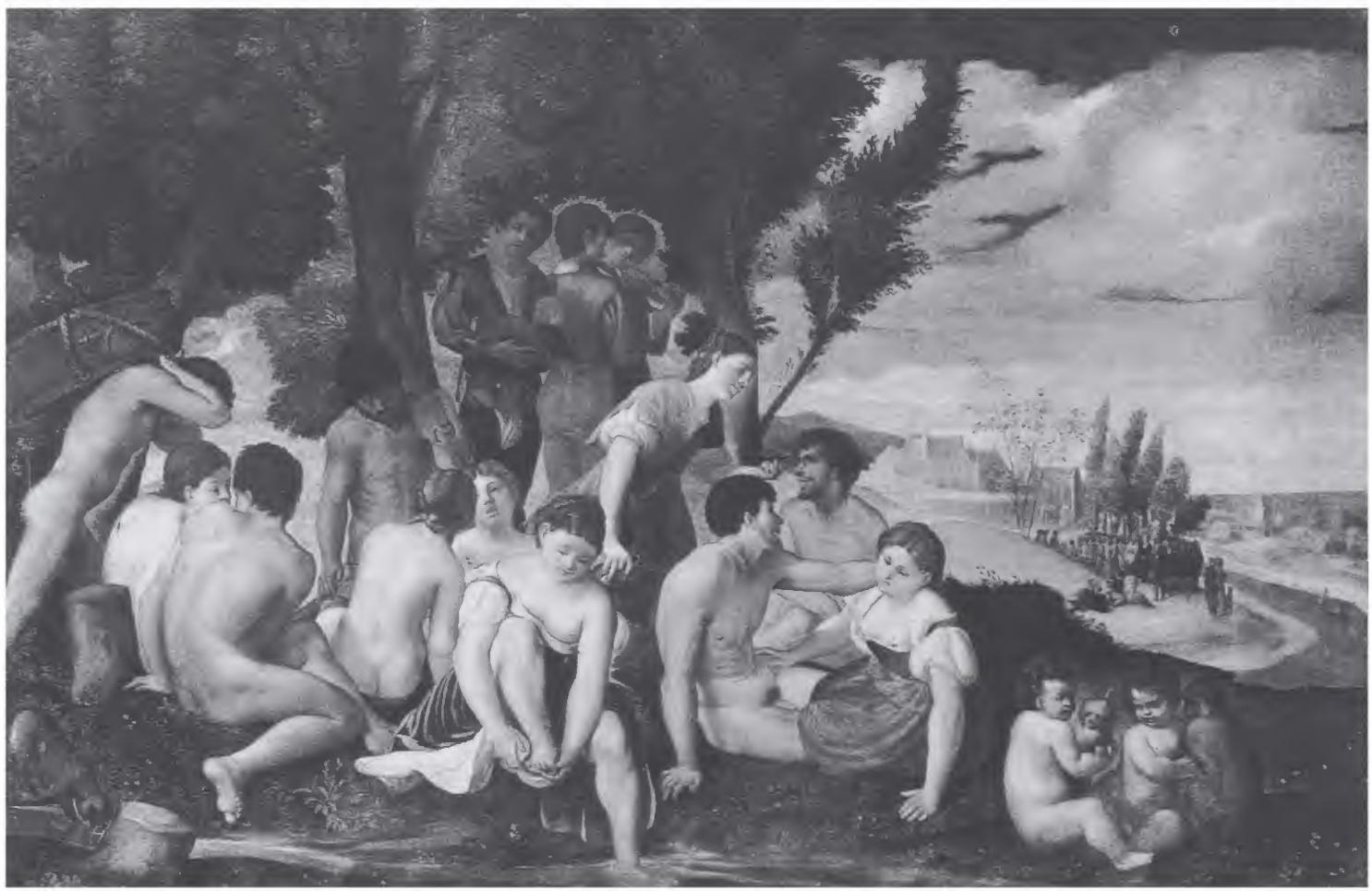
Longhi left the dating of the painting somewhat open-ended,² since he associated it with a group of works that he placed in the second decade of the sixteenth century but also emphasized its affinities with Titian's paintings for the Camerino, thought to have arrived in Ferrara at the end of that decade or, more likely, during the first half of the 1520s. His suggestions of authorship and date were nevertheless accepted almost unanimously, even by those who, like Lasareff (1941), did not agree with Longhi's attribution of the rest of the group to Dosso. Among opponents of Longhi's grouping, only Dreyer (1964–65) resolutely rejected Dosso's authorship, suggesting instead another Ferrarese painter; and Trevisani (in Rovigo 1984) was alone in taking a neutral position. Berenson, who had not cited the work in 1932, assigned it to Battista in 1936 but in 1968 acceded to the then-current attribution to Dosso.

While Buscaroli (1935) and Zampetti (in Venice 1955) accepted Longhi's identification of the painting with the "Baccanaria" of Alfonso d'Este's Camerino, many other historians have dismissed this possibility.³ Until recently, most of these have believed that the picture Vasari cited is more likely to be a painting in the National Gallery in London (fig. 2). For one thing, the dimensions of that work correspond more closely to those of others known to have been in the Camerino; for another, its iconography is actually consistent with a Bacchanal as derived from classical literary sources. The present painting more generically depicts a Bagno, or Bath, a subject dear to Northern European painters (one thinks of the famous and now lost *Women Bathing* of Jan van Eyck, which Bartolomeo Facio saw in 1456 in the home of Ottaviano della Carda in Urbino)⁴ and one that in the early cinquecento took on added appeal, mostly because of its erotic implications.

For some time there has been a tendency to move the date of this painting back a few



Fig. 106. Dosso Dossi (?), *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist, Jerome, and Paul, and a Donor*. Oil on canvas. Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome



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years earlier than Longhi's original suggestion. Antonelli Trenti (1964), in the context of a general rereading of Dosso's early career, pointed out how clearly the picture's entire right side—including the nude young man putting his hand on the shoulder of a fully dressed woman and the two little children holding monkeys—derives from Titian's so-called *Three Ages of Man* (fig. 67), which Antonelli Trenti and Longhi both dated to before 1513.⁵ It followed that *The Bath* should also be dated about 1513. With this argument made, Puppi (1964) could easily posit a date only one year earlier in order to identify the painting with a work commissioned from Dosso by Francesco II Gonzaga and paid for by the Gonzaga administration on April 11, 1512.⁶ Recorded as a "quadrum unum magnum cum undecis figuris humanis" (large single painting with eleven human figures), that completed work was placed in one of the upper rooms of the Palazzo San Sebastiano at Mantua.

Mezzetti (1965a) held to a variation of Puppi's theory, calling the present painting a second

version of the Mantuan commission done by Dosso about 1518. Many other scholars concurred entirely with Puppi.⁷ Yet in studying the dispersion of the Gonzaga collections, Eidelberg and Rowlands (1994) found no trace of this painting, making it unlikely that it was ever included there.⁸

This issue has been clarified further by Clifford Malcolm Brown's careful reexamination (1997) of all the extant documentation, much of it copied from lost originals, on the Palazzo San Sebastiano in Mantua. Brown has convincingly demonstrated that the eleven-figure painting Dosso was paid for in 1512 (never cited as a Bath) must have presented an allegory of Francesco II Gonzaga, since its companion piece, for which a certain mysterious Matteo da Bologna was paid, was titled *Apollo and the Muses in the Presence of Francesco II Gonzaga*, and since the palace was decorated entirely with art having a biographical significance for the duke and his family. Moreover, although the gigantic dimensions listed for the painting by Dosso—8 by 11 *braccia*, about 12 by 17 feet—probably

Provenance

Moroni restorers, Milan (ca. 1920); Lurati collection (sale, Galleria Pesaro, Milan, April 1928, no. 133, as by Giorgione); Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, Florence (1928); his gift to the Museo Nazionale di Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome (1929)¹⁷

References

- Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., pp. 310–11); Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 83–84); Buscaroli 1935, p. 214; Berenson 1936, p. 149; Lasareff 1941, p. 132, 133; E. Wind 1948, p. 62; Suida 1949, pp. 282–83; Battisti 1954, 196–97; Zampetti in Venice 1955, pp. 262–63;

Walker 1956, pp. 36–37, 40; Volpe 1961 (1994 ed., p. 21); Gould 1962, pp. 53–55; Antonelli Trenti 1964, pp. 407–8; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 24–26; Puppi 1964, p. 20; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 12–13, 114; Puppi, 1965; Berenson 1968, p. 113; Gibbons 1968, pp. 117–18, 203–5; Puppi 1968, p. 360; Hope 1971, p. 641; Volpe 1974, p. 24; Volpe 1981, p. 141 (1982 ed., p. 10); Trevisani in Rovigo 1984, p. 155; A. De Marchi 1986, pp. 22–24; B. L. Brown 1987, p. 55; Leone De Castris 1988, pp. 5–6; Tellini Perina 1989, pp. 25, 226; Holberton 1993, p. 250; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 403; Bacchi 1994, p. 55; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 28–30, 295–96; Del Bravo 1994, p. 75; Eidelberg and Rowlands 1994, pp. 250–51; Romani 1996, pp. 89–90; C. M. Brown 1997, pp. 142, 151–58

constitute a slip of the pen for 8 by 11 *piedi* (feet), nevertheless the documents consistently speak of “large” paintings, an adjective that could hardly be applied to the medium-sized Castel Sant’Angelo canvas. And while the documents concerning Dosso’s painting for the Gonzaga family explicitly specify eleven figures, the present work can be regarded as having that number only if one discounts the two toddlers on the right and the three musicians in the center (as well as the crowd in the distance). Since the musicians are integral to the story, they would presumably have figured in any tally, unless we simply dispense with the logic of numbers and exclude whatever figures we like. There is no well-founded reason, therefore, to identify this painting with Mantua and the Gonzaga court. The questions of its authorship and chronology can be resolved only by an examination of its style.

Antonelli Trenti’s observation (1964) that the right side of the painting is based on Titian’s *Three Ages of Man* seems particularly pertinent. This artist certainly knew the painting: the similar poses and interaction of the two young people in both canvases convincingly testify to the connection, as does the foreshortening of the female figure standing above the couple here, which echoes that of the young man in the *Three Ages of Man* (fig. 67). The Titian was traditionally dated about 1511–12 and Dosso’s Costabili polyptych (see cat. no. 6) about 1523, allowing scholars to imagine that *The Bath* was painted by Dosso himself at some intermediate date. But now we know the polyptych to be from about 1513–14 and the Titian to have almost certainly been painted in 1516, after the artist’s first journey to Ferrara.⁹ Thus the situation becomes one in which all logic is turned upside down—*The Bath*, which seemed a credible prelude to Dosso’s fully developed style as seen in the Costabili polyptych, is now known to postdate the polyptych. In Dosso’s career, *The Bath* would thus be an inexplicable work without precedents or antecedents. There is no logical way to resolve this impasse except to exclude the painting from Dosso’s oeuvre.¹⁰

A close examination of the work tends to confirm an even later dating. Many of its figures obviously derive from Titian’s *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (fig. 22), which must have reached Ferrara by about 1520.¹¹ For instance, the head and torso of the young woman on the right in *The Bath* precisely parallel, in mirror image, those of

the woman near the center of the *Andrians*. The hair of both women is styled exactly the same way, with a long braid wrapped around the crown of the head, and there is practically no other instance of such a fashion in the second decade of the century.¹² The head of the young man in *The Bath* who places a hand on the woman’s shoulder is based on the head of the young man lying on the ground looking up in the center of Titian’s composition. Moreover, the figure of the cupbearer pouring wine in the *Andrians* clearly served as the inspiration for the porter at the left in *The Bath*; both derive, as Gibbons (1968) observed, from the Roman statue of a warrior in the Galleria Borghese. Even the group of brightly dressed musicians seems based on an idea of Titian’s in the *Andrians*, where two young men are seen singing behind the same cupbearer.

Other influences also abound. Gibbons pointed out that the form of the woman seen from behind in *The Bath* was derived from Marcantonio Raimondi’s engraving the *Judgment of Paris* of about 1511 or later, executed from a drawing by Raphael; that the nude young man on the left is a variant of one of Michelangelo’s *Ignudi* from the Sistine ceiling (it also has a certain affinity with a drawing of two satyrs by Titian, as noted by Ballarin);¹³ and that the young man on the right, whose connection with the *Three Ages of Man* has already been mentioned, may also derive from a figure in Michelangelo’s *Battle of Cascina* (Titian and Dosso saw a fragment of the cartoon for that work in the Gonzaga family collection during their stay in Mantua in November 1519).¹⁴ Further inspiration from Michelangelo is evident in *The Bath* in the twining pose of the male nude with his arm cutting across his legs directly behind the couple, which reflects in mirror image the pose of the *Ignudo* above the Persian Sibyl and to the left on the Sistine ceiling.

All these correspondences make it impossible to believe that *The Bath* was painted before Titian’s *Andrians*—as Suida had already pointed out in 1949—or that it dates before 1520. Nor can it be reconciled with Dosso’s works of that period. Moreover, with its multitude of sources, the picture has the feeling of a pastiche, uncharacteristic for our artist. The logical conclusion is that *The Bath* is not a work by Dosso.

Finally, neither in style nor in execution does this painting resemble other specimens of the “Longhi group.” It entirely lacks the peculiar

grayish coloration of the three paintings depicting the Virgin and Child with other figures in Naples (cat. no. 56), the Capitoline Museums in Rome (fig. 106), and Philadelphia (cat. no. 57), instead showing a figurative preference more purely Venetian. The Venetian orientation is also evident in the group of buildings on the right, which recall those in the *Venus* in Dresden, begun by Giorgione and completed by Titian, and ones in other important works by Titian.¹⁵ The distant horizon of sea appears to echo Titian's *Concert Champêtre* in the Louvre. The thicket of trees is in a style unlike Dosso's and is utterly inconsistent with that in the Philadelphia *Holy Family* (cat. no. 57).

The identical argument can be made for the Da Varano altarpiece in the archbishop's palace in Ferrara (see entry for cat. no. 58).¹⁶

I know of no other painting that can be attributed with any certainty to the same hand as this one, and therefore I prefer to leave the work anonymous, especially since its condition is only fair and it is not fully legible in its current state.

ML

1. Vasari 1568 (1966–87 ed., vol. 5, p. 417).

2. But he had settled the question by 1934 (1956 ed., p. 83), when he wrote that the painting seemed to render perfectly "the flavor of the Titianesque milieu that formed at the Ferrara court about 1515."

3. See in particular Battisti 1954 (1960 ed., p. 120); Walker 1956, pp. 35–40; Gould 1962, pp. 53–55. There is nothing to substantiate Walker's assertion that the London *Bacchanal* was, among the many paintings by Dosso in the castle complex, the work cited thusly by Francisco de Hollanda in 1548 (1964 ed., p. 42) as one of the high points of Italian painting: "At Ferrara we have the painting of Dosso in the Castello." Luisa Ciammitti (1998) cautiously suggests that Dosso's painting for Alfonso's Camerino might have been the *Allegory with Pan* now in the Getty Museum (cat. no. 38).

4. Baxandall 1971 (1986 ed., p. 107). According to Del Bravo 1994, p. 75, however, the Castel Sant'Angelo *Bath* is based on a passage of Philostratus, II.17: 12–13).

5. Longhi 1946, p. 65.

6. Arco 1857, vol. 2, p. 79.

7. Ballarin (1986 lecture and Ballarin 1994–95), A. De Marchi (1986), Leone De Castris (1988), Tellini Perina (1989), Holberton (1993), Bacchi (1994), Romani (1996).

8. An early Gonzaga provenance for the London canvas is also improbable. Its history can be followed step by step from 1631, when, as Mattaliano (1993) has shown, it was

in the collection of Roberto Canonici in Ferrara. Damaged in a fire at the Palazzo Canonici in 1639, it was no longer listed in the 1655 inventory of the collection, but it reappeared in an inventory made the same year of the possessions of Carlo II di Gonzaga Nevers in Mantua. From there, in a series of documented peregrinations, the work found its way to its present home. See Mattaliano 1993, pp. 359–65, and Fredericksen 1998.

9. Joannides 1991, pp. 374–82.

10. On this subject, see also the biographical essay, pp. 6–7, and the entry for cat. no. 56.

11. Hope believes it was completed in the winter of 1525: Hope 1980, p. 59; Hope 1987, pp. 39–40.

12. Among the very first examples of hairstyles unequivocally identical to these, one may cite those in the *Compianto* of Nicolò Pisano at Bologna (1518) and Garofalo's *Massacre of the Innocents* at Ferrara (1519). As the result of a misreading, Mezzetti (1965a, p. 114) mistakenly wrote that Stella Mary Pearce (quoted in Gould 1975, p. 83) said the dress styles correspond to those of the 1530s; in fact she was speaking exclusively of the London *Bacchanal*, and of costumes completely different from these.

13. Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 2, pls. 263, 264.

14. Gibbons 1968, pp. 28, 205; Ballarin 1994–95, vol. 2, pls. 265, 267, 268.

15. *Noli Me Tangere*, National Gallery, London; *Sacred and Profane Love*, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

16. The Venetian element is even stronger, however, in two other paintings discussed by Longhi, the *Holy Family with Saints* in Glasgow (fig. 107) and the *Salome* formerly in the Lazzaroni Collection, Milan.

17. Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 83).

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The painting's condition is not good: the surface is dull and there are various large paint losses with extensive retouching. The paint film is abraded. No imprint of an original strainer could be found. A dark preparation can be seen underneath the areas of paint loss. There are no fingerprints in the paint film. Although the colors are not as intense and the landscape is quite unlike those in Dosso's accepted works, the execution of various details such as the hairstyles and eyes, the careful study of the lamb, and the particular way the bodies are twisted are faintly reminiscent of examples by Dosso.

DOSSO DOSSI (?) OR SEBASTIANO FILIPPI

56. *Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist, Saint Barbara, and a Donor*

Ca. 1520–25
Oil on panel, 19½ × 29 in. (49.5 × 73.5 cm)
Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples
Q 276

Provenance
Palazzo Farnese, Rome (1644 inv. no. 4301; 1653 inv. no. 238; 1662–80 inv. no. 101; 1697 inv.; 1728–34 inv.; all as by Perugino); Palazzo Capodimonte, Naples; Museo Reale Borbonico at Capodimonte, Naples (1821 inv. no. 11, 444, as by Titian; 1852 inv. no. 181E, as by Giovanni Bellini; until 1860); Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples (from 1860)

References
Pagano 1831, p. 71; Fiorelli 1873, p. 18; Rinaldis 1911, pp. 122–23; Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., p. 309); Rinaldis 1928, p. 131; A. Venturi 1928, p. 977; Quintavalle 1932, no. 276; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., pp. 81–82); Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., pp. 157–58); Lasareff 1941, p. 132; Molajoli 1957, p. 67; Volpe 1961 (1994 ed., p. 21); Antonelli Trenti 1964, pp. 406–8; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 23–24; Mezzetti

Composed like a traditional Venetian half-length *Sacra Conversazione*, this painting actually brings the donor, clearly distinguished from the others because he has no halo, into the gathering of saints. The female saint on the left is identified not by any attribute but rather by the archaic device of a gold inscription running along the neckline of her dress, which reads “*Sancta Barbara*.¹” Saint Barbara was known all over Italy, but her devotional nucleus was in Venice. When Jacob of Voragine’s *Golden Legend* was printed in Venice in 1490 in the vernacular translation by Nicolò de Manerbi, her Life, not included in the original work, was added; according to legend, her body had been translated from the Orient to the basilica at Torcello and then to the Venetian church of San Salvador.¹ But we can assume that in Ferrara too there was a cult devoted to the saint, since she was the patron saint of artillery men, and Alfonso d’Este’s passion for artillery was well known.

On the donor’s head is a *scapfato*, a kind of cap, usually worn in conjunction with a broad beret, that began to appear toward the end of the second decade of the cinquecento, as did the type of snood in which Saint Barbara’s hair is gathered, which is of costly light-blue fabric dotted with gold and falls from about halfway down the back of her head. The snood is similar to the one in Giovanni Bellini’s *Toilet of Venus*, dated 1515 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), but not to headdresses worn in earlier Titian and Palma Vecchio versions, which fall from the top of the head. The gold-decorated collar of the donor’s garment also has counterparts in works painted about 1520 or shortly thereafter, for example, the so-called *Venetian Lovers* of the early 1520s by Paris Bordone (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan).

These chronological indications seem contradicted by the painting’s archaic compositional type, which still belongs to “proto-Classical” fifteenth-century style in which the heads are arranged along two perspectival lines; also characteristic of that style is the measured contrast

between the converging heads of the Baptist and Saint Barbara, which almost touch, and the diverging heads of the donor and Saint Joseph. It was probably due to its composition that the painting was ascribed to Perugino during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it was in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome.² Once it arrived at Capodimonte in Naples in about 1760, the attribution underwent changes: to Giovanni Bellini; to his school; to school of Titian; and finally to Cariani, a painter from Bergamo.³ In 1927 Longhi ascribed the painting to Dosso Dossi and dated it sometime around 1510 or shortly thereafter, thus filling a void in a period of the artist’s career for which there were no attributed works; at the time the earliest securely dated work was the altarpiece of 1522 in Modena. Longhi rightly pointed out the painting’s poor state of conservation (“a work horrendously ruined by repainting”). Neither a 1962 restoration nor a much more extensive restoration carried out from 1981 to 1985 by the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro in Rome has been able fully to correct this damage.⁴ During the latter campaign, however, the sky on the right grew lighter, especially toward the horizon, regaining an atmospheric quality it previously lacked; the landscape, which before had come up to the level of Saint Joseph’s neck was brought down and now dips below his shoulders. Also changed, in shape and chromatic value, are the figures’ cloaks. The yellow orpiment of Saint Joseph’s garment has unfortunately been almost entirely lost. It is difficult to understand where Longhi saw “Doso’s yellows and greens”; more convincing is his perception of the artist’s “bold, intense personality, already capable of transforming to his own purposes the Giorgionesque, Palmesque, and Friulian approaches.”⁵

Longhi ascribed to the same hand and the same period the *Holy Family with the Young Saint John the Baptist, a Cat, and Two Donors* in Philadelphia (cat. no. 57), the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in the Capitoline Museums in Rome (fig. 106), a *Holy Family* in the Glasgow Gallery (fig. 107), and the



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Fig. 107. Dosso Dossi (?), *Holy Family and Saints*. Oil on panel. Glasgow Museums: Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove

Gyges and Candaules in the Galleria Borghese in Rome. By giving these all to Dosso, Longhi resolved a problem he had posed in an article of 1926⁶ in which he had left the question of their authorship hanging between the Ferrarese painter and the young Callisto Piazza of Lodi. In 1927, referring to some old notes, Longhi also attributed to Dosso a "magnificent altarpiece with the Madonna and donors, very similar to the [Philadelphia] painting but perhaps even more beautiful," which left the Export Office of Naples in 1917 and subsequently vanished from circulation. In addition there was a "Bacchanal" he had seen in Milan about 1920, which he linked closely to the others and which shortly thereafter arrived, a gift from the Contini Bonacossi collection, at the Castel Sant'Angelo: the painting called *The Bath* (cat. no. 55).⁷ These paintings, all attributed by Longhi to the young Dosso, are often referred to as the "Longhi group" (see also the biographical essay above, p. 6).

Longhi's assessment of the present painting was

1965a, pp. 8–10, 103; Puppi 1965; Gibbons 1968, pp. 116–17, 192; Puppi 1968, p. 360; Volpe 1974, pp. 21–23; Mezzetti 1975, p. 12; Volpe 1981 (1982 ed., pp. 9–10); Causa 1982, p. 148; Trevisani in Rovigo 1984, p. 158; A. De Marchi 1986, pp. 24–25; Bertini 1987, pp. 212–29; Leone De Castris 1988, pp. 3–5; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 403; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 31, 296; Jestaz 1994, p. 170; Leone De Castris and Utili in *Collezione Farnese* 1994, pp. 155–57; Leone De Castris in Parma, Munich, Naples 1995, pp. 171–72; Romani 1996, pp. 90–91



Fig. 108. Sebastiano Filippi, *The Visitation*. San Biagio, Lendinara (Rovigo)

initially rejected by Rinaldis (1928), by Quintavalle (1932), who thought it was the work of a Venetian painter, and by Lasareff (1941), who called attention to its rather Brescian and Cremonese characteristics; but subsequently, Longhi's opinion has gained increasing support. The sole dissenting voices in recent times have been those of Dreyer (1964–65), Puppi (1968), and Trevisani (in Rovigo 1984), who dismiss Dosso as the possible author but offer no alternatives. It is the recent discovery of documents for the Costabili polyptych dated 1513–14, published in 1995 by Adriano Franceschini,⁸ that now casts an entirely different light on the Naples painting. The Naples work, especially since it is of a distinctly archaizing cast, is in no way stylistically comparable to the altarpiece executed by Dosso and Garofalo. Longhi (and most other scholars, following him) considered the present painting and the other just-named pictures to be anticipations of the polyptych: earlier paintings foreshadowing, without fully attaining, the style that came to fruition there and in all of Dosso's most typical works. But if the Costabili polyptych does indeed date from 1513–14, there is

little previous time available in which the young artist could have produced an entire group of works in a different style. Moreover, as we have already seen, the details of the clothing in the Naples painting point to a date close to 1520 or even later, rather than to 1512–13. The only possible conclusion is that the work was not painted by Dosso.

To arrive at an alternative attribution, however, we must recognize first that the Naples panel is without doubt a work of the same hand as the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in the Capitoline (fig. 106), as becomes clear from a simple comparison of the heads of the two Virgins as well as from the paintings' morphological characteristics and identical chromatic register, with its uniformly diffuse light, quite unlike the luster and sparkle of Dosso's palette. For the very same reasons, as well as because of the overall resemblance of the landscapes and the dramatic cluster of clouds, it is clear that the same artist also painted the canvas now in Philadelphia (cat. no. 57), whose Virgin is the twin sister of the Saint Barbara here. The use of wood as support and the archaizing composition make this Naples painting in all likelihood the first of the three. This artist, like Dosso, had a grounding in Venetian stylistic premises,⁹ but he moved in a different direction. In the painting seen here, the idea of making the heads converge or diverge may derive from the *Holy Family with Saints and Donors* attributed to Sebastiano del Piombo (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), while the donor's face, with its long nose, harks back to Sebastiano's Saint Sinibaldo in the organ shutters painted for the church of San Bartolomeo in Venice, and the angle of the Baptist's head is clearly related to that of the young man's head in Titian's so-called *Three Ages of Man* (fig. 67). Moreover, the unusual use of paint in relief to render the gold embroideries on the neckline of the Madonna's dress, the fringe of her veil, and the decoration of Saint Barbara's snood, clearly shows that the Costabili polyptych was a major event in this painter's artistic education.

The exact same sort of decoration occurs in the *Saint Peter* panel signed "Sebastianus Pictor Faciebat/MDXXV" in the pilgrimage church of the Madonna dell'Pilastrello in Lendinara, as well as in the *Visitation* altarpiece (fig. 108) in the church of San Biagio in the same town, which carries the identical signature and date. I have shown elsewhere¹⁰ that this "Sebastianus Pictor" should

be identified with Sebastiano Filippi (father of Camillo and grandfather of the more famous Bastianino), who was documented as having worked in Lendinara, near Rovigo. Other details also compare closely. For example, in the painting seen here, the halo over the head of Saint Joseph, which filters the luminosity of the sky through a screen of its own golden yellow color, resembles the halo of Saint Biagio on the right in the altarpiece at Lendinara, through which the green of the background rock is seen in a darker, yellowish tone. Interestingly, the whole rock in that altarpiece, with its slender tufts of green and small trees outlined against the sky, reappears as exactly as if it had been traced (except in reverse) in the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in the Capitoline; and the Saint Paul on the right in that painting, in the morphology of his face, the way his fingers rest on the hilt of his sword, and his distinctive feet, is the twin brother of the Saint Paul in a panel now in the Pinacoteca of the Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo, itself a pendant to the signed *Saint Peter* in the Pilastrello church. The Capitoline Saint Paul could be compared with equal advantage to Saint Joseph in the San Biagio altarpiece at Lendinara, while the head of Saint Joseph hidden in the shadows in the *Holy Family* in Philadelphia is very closely related to that of Saint Zachary on the left in the Lendinara altarpiece.¹¹ All these similarities suggest that a single artist was responsible for the works in question.

In particular, the three paintings in Naples, Rome, and Philadelphia are perfectly homogeneous in style and therefore should, in my opinion, be attributed to Sebastiano Filippi, who, called a “maestro” in a 1511 document, became a “pictor” in 1513 and had surely died by 1530.¹² Thus, for generational reasons as well he would have been bound to keep an attentive eye on the work of Sebastiano del Piombo, a Venetian master in greater public view than the elusive Giorgione and certainly more famous at the time of Sebastiano Filippi’s training than the young Titian. And, at the other cultural frontiers of the territory in which he found himself working, he must have acquired an understanding of the peculiar twilight luminosity of the Brescian painting of Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo and the very early Moretto. Similarly, the novelty of the great Costabili polyptych could not have escaped his notice. That Dosso’s influence became dominant in his work is underlined by the fact that the San

Biagio altarpiece, though signed and dated, was once reasonably held to be a work of Dosso himself,¹³ with the inscription regarded as false.

Within the ambit of Sebastiano Filippi’s brief career, which lasted less than twenty years and must necessarily be centered around the only certifiable date, 1525, the Naples panel should occupy the first of the currently known positions, about or slightly after 1520.

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1. See Kaftal 1978, pp. 103–96; Cortesi Bosco 1980, p. 121; Pirovano 1997, p. 41.

2. For the painting’s provenance and former attributions, see Leone De Castris and Utili in *Collezione Farnese* 1994, pp. 155–57.

3. Rinaldis 1911, pp. 122–23.

4. Gibbons 1968, p. 192; Leone De Castris in Parma, Munich, Naples 1995, p. 172.

5. In this context, the “Palmsque” mode meant for Longhi the construction of the image in large zones of color, and “Friulian” signified, beyond geographical or cultural boundaries, a transformation of Giorgionism in a more emphatically expressive direction—either through shrill, unusual chromatic juxtapositions or by stressing the movement and gigantism of the forms. In a way, the terms were equivalent to the later-coined formulations of “eccentricity” and “anticlassicism.”

6. Longhi 1926 (1967 ed., p. 106). The Glasgow painting and the *Gyges and Candaules* of the Borghese Gallery are to my mind not stylistically consistent with each other and should be ascribed to two different hands; and different as well is the Naples-Rome-Philadelphia group.

7. He also placed in Dosso’s oeuvre, just slightly before this, the *Madonna* at the National Gallery, London (no. 2907), and the former Lanz *Saint Jerome* (now Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)—two paintings which since 1931 and especially since the publication of Berenson’s *Index* (Berenson 1957) have been attributed to the Brescian painters Giovanni and Bernardino da Asola, who were active in Venice. On the critical background of both works, see Gould 1975, p. 29.

8. Franceschini 1995, pp. 110–15.

9. Ballarin (1994–95, vol. 2, pls. 270–71) also compared the Neapolitan panel with a Bellini workshop *Madonna and Child with Saints* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); but the absence of a parapet in the Naples panel shows its greater modernity.

10. Lucco 1998.

11. A possible objection to this analysis, that the San Biagio altarpiece is superior in quality to the other paintings, can be countered by noting that the greatest differences are actually between two identically signed and dated works, the altarpiece itself and the Pilastrello panel. Moreover, the apparent superiority of the altarpiece derives at least in part from the painter’s adoption of a very lofty model, Garofalo’s altarpiece for Ostellato of 1518 (Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome).

12. Romagnolo 1996, p. 421.

13. Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 108).

DOSSO DOSSI (?) OR SEBASTIANO FILIPPI

57. *Holy Family with the Young Saint John the Baptist, a Cat, and Two Donors*

Ca. 1525–30

*Oil on canvas,
38½ × 45½ in.
(96.8 × 115.8 cm)*

*Philadelphia Museum of
Art, The John G.
Johnson Collection*

Provenance

Eugène de Beauharnais, duke of Leuchtenberg, Milan (1805–14) and Stadtpalais, Odeonplatz, Munich (1814–24); Maximilian de Beauharnais, duke of Leuchtenberg, Munich (1824–52, as by Moroni); Grand-Duchess Maria Nicolaeva of Russia, Marinepalais, Saint Petersburg (by 1852); Sully, London; Trott, Paris; John G. Johnson, Philadelphia (from 1910); John G. Johnson Collection (from 1917); Philadelphia Museum of Art (from 1933)⁶

References

Passavant 1851, pl. 23; Berenson 1913, pp. 122–23; Longhi 1926 (1967 ed., p. 106); Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., pp. 309–10); A. Venturi 1928, p. 976; Berenson 1932, p. 594; Longhi 1934 (1956 ed., p. 82); Berenson 1936, p. 511; Longhi 1940 (1956 ed., p. 158);

This painting was acquired by John Johnson in 1910 in Paris from the antiquarian Trott, on the advice of Bernard Berenson.¹ It had previously belonged to the collection of the viceroy of Italy, Eugène de Beauharnais (later duke of Leuchtenberg), as we know from an engraved reproduction of it by J. N. Muxel in the catalogue of that collection (Passavant 1851). An old note on the back of a photograph taken of the painting when it was at Trott's indicates that it came from the Martinengo collection in Brescia.² This relevant but unverifiable notice is not inconsistent with the picture's documented travels, since it was precisely from the Milanese and Brescian markets that Eugène de Beauharnais put together his collection, during the brief period (1805–14) when, as viceroy, he was in Milan. While in the Leuchtenberg collection the painting was attributed to the Bergamasque artist Giambattista Moroni, a fact that can be read as further indication that it originated in Lombardy near Bergamo or Brescia. However, in his 1913 catalogue of the Johnson collection, Berenson ascribed the work to a provincial Veneto painter, perhaps from Bergamo, working about 1530 under the influence of Lorenzo Lotto and Andrea Previtali.

Longhi (1926) proposed that the picture was by the same hand as the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in the Capitoline Museums (fig. 106) and a panel in the Glasgow Museum (fig. 107), leaving open the question of the artist's identity; at the time he might have been thinking of the early Callisto Piazza, if not the young Dosso. All doubts and hesitations were overcome for Longhi the following year, however, when he attributed the entire group to Dosso, filling the gap in his early years just after 1510 (see also the entry for cat. no. 56). This assessment subsequently won the support of nearly all the critics; the sole exceptions were Berenson, who remained faithful to his original idea, Lasareff (1941), Dreyer (1964–65), Puppi (1968), and Trevisani (in Rovigo 1984). Longhi did not skimp on expressions of admiration for the present painting: a “magnificent altarpiece”; “the

quality is very high”; an “exquisite sense of the monumental”; an “admirable landscape.” He saw in it a general Giorgionism, to which was added “the first Ferrarese Raphaelism”; he thought the young Baptist and the baby Jesus were in a style halfway between Dosso and Garofalo. In 1934 he further honed his position, asserting, counter to Berenson and without substantial evidence, that “the fashions, in fact, are more consistent with 1515 than 1530.”

Today, however, it is clear that the fashions are more consistent with 1530 than 1515, especially the tall-fronted *a balzo* (clifflike) headdress worn by the female donor, which is comparable to that in another painting in this group in the Capitoline, and indeed identical in style to the one worn by Salome in two works by the Lombard artist Callisto Piazza, the *Beheading of John the Baptist* (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice), dated 1526, and the *Presentation of the Baptist's Head* (Church of the Incoronata, Lodi), painted in 1530–31. In addition, a dress similar to the one seen here is worn by the bride in Garofalo's *Wedding Feast at Cana* (Hermitage, Saint Petersburg), signed and dated 1531, and by the central woman in a drawing called *Concert* by Calisto Piazza (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), datable to the late 1520s. The male donor in this Philadelphia painting has hair short on his neck and wears a beard, a feature particularly in vogue after Pope Clement VII let his own grow after the sack of Rome in 1527. Although mens' fashions are slower and more complicated in their changes than those of women, the man's jacket here is quite comparable to that of a figure on the left in Callisto Piazza's *Sermon of the Baptist* of 1530–31 at the Incoronata in Lodi and to one worn in the Codogno *Assumption* of 1533 by the same artist.

The Raphaelism Longhi observed in this painting in the Christ child (obviously thinking of the plaque-bearing cherub in the *Foligno Madonna*) becomes a massive, heavily rounded Michelangelism for the figure of the young Baptist, reflecting a stylistic influence that was



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Lasareff 1941, p. 132; Marceau 1941, p. 5; Friedmann 1946, p. 95; Berenson 1956, pp. 140–42; Berenson 1957, p. 206; Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 406; Dreyer 1964–65, pp. 23–25; Mezzetti 1965a, pp. 8–10, 108; Puppi 1965; Marceau in Sweeny 1966, p. xiii; Sweeny 1966, p. 27; Gibbons 1968, pp. 118, 193–94; Puppi 1968, p. 360; Calvesi 1969b, p. 168; Fredericksen and Zeri 1972, p. 67; Volpe 1974, pp. 21, 23–24; Mezzetti 1975, p. 12; Volpe 1981, p. 144 (1982 ed., pp. 9–10); Trevisani in Rovigo 1984, p. 158; Humfrey in Bologna, Washington, New York 1986–87, p. 116; A. De Marchi 1986, p. 24; Macioce in Rome 1987, p. 50; Pfeiffer in Rome 1987, p. 36; Rossi in Rome 1987, pp. 15–16; Leone De Castris 1988, pp. 3, 5; Pujmanová 1988, p. 163; Ballarin in Paris 1993, pp. 402–4; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 31, 298; Romani 1996, pp. 90–91

not adopted in Northern Italy until the early 1520s. The landscape and the dramatic clouds are closely allied to those in paintings now in Rome and Naples (fig. 106 and cat. no. 56). The distinctive overall coloration, bright in tone but vaguely grayish and crepuscular, is the same as that seen in the *Visitation* altarpiece at San Biagio in Lendinara, signed by Sebastiano Filippi and dated 1525. An echo of the head of Saint Zachary in the latter painting is visible here in the head of Saint Joseph, half-hidden in the shadows. Also consistent with the Naples and Rome paintings (as Longhi himself had pointed out) is “that singular manner of suddenly displaying a contrast of color by unexpectedly reversing dark fabrics to uncover bright passages of the cloth lining them.”³

The x-ray (fig. 109) taken of the painting during restoration in 1992–93⁴ also reveals a modus operandi different from Dosso’s typical approach. Whereas in many of his early paintings the Ferrarese master went through a whole series of changes and revisions, confirmed in their x-rays (see, e.g., the entry for cat. no. 12 and fig. 58), in this painting the compositional plan was apparently realized without any outstanding changes. Not even minimal pentimenti can be found for the principal figures, the landscape, or the sky; these elements were executed exactly as they were conceived. The sole variations are in the backdrop. While the figure of Saint Joseph, in darkness, was painted over part of the bright sky, as can clearly be discerned even with the naked eye, this does not represent a last-minute change but rather an aspect of the artist’s normal working method; minor abrasions on the body of the young Baptist make it possible to see that, in the same way, he was painted over the Madonna’s blue gown. Also very strange, and not at all typical of Dosso, is the spatial arrangement. The parapet behind the female donor must be very close to her because she casts a sharp shadow on it, and it appears to be practically in a line with the edge of the platform supporting the Madonna’s throne, thus delineating a sort of L-shaped space; on the other hand, the profile of the broken column left of Saint Joseph appears to match that of the column on the plinth at the right, making the plan of the space incomprehensible.

Another curious detail is the relationship between the poses of the two donors, who look like a married couple (although there is no actual

evidence of this). Paying no attention to the Christ child or homage to the holy group, the man, having removed his hat, seems to be gazing intently at the woman; for her part, she looks not at the holy family but directly ahead—as if over the man’s head, since she kneels on a platform that puts her at a distinctly higher level than her presumed spouse. It is most unusual for a woman to be depicted in sixteenth-century portraiture as having more importance than a man; nor would such a relationship normally have been acceptable at that time, especially in Ferrarese court society. But since we do not know the identity of the couple portrayed or anything about their personal lives, this oddity cannot be explained, only speculated about. Perhaps the best we can say is that a *hapax legomenon* (or, unique instance of this sort), which would be incomprehensible in a major cultural center, might be more likely to occur in a provincial area—such as Lendinara, where Sebastiano Filippi worked. (For other considerations regarding the attribution of this painting to Filippi, see the entry for cat. no. 56.)

Since Sebastiano Filippi had certainly died by early 1530, as we learn from a document dated January 11 of that year,⁵ this picture should be dated toward the very end of his career, after 1525. That would reverse the chronological order established by Longhi, who considered the Capitoline painting to be later than the Philadelphia canvas. Further confirmation of this painting’s later date can also be found in the landscape, where the setting of golden yellow-green tree boughs against an intense blue sea seems to echo the identical juxtaposition of tones in the upper right-hand corner of Titian’s *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (fig. 22), a painting intended for Alfonso’s Camerino that appears to have arrived in Ferrara about 1520.

As Berenson (1913) pointed out, the letters “LX” carved in a scroll on the plinth of the column on the right cannot be considered part of the date 1560 in Roman numerals; nor can they refer to the age of the male donor, since he appears much younger than sixty. Since there is no evidence that the canvas has been cut on the right-hand side, thus precluding the possibility that the inscription continued, one might wonder whether it is not perhaps a cipher for some general invocation such as *Laus Christo*, with the Greek initial X standing, as was customary, for the name of Christ.

1. Marceau in Sweeny 1966, p. xiii; Sweeny 1966, p. 27.
2. Volpe 1974.
3. Longhi 1927a (1967 ed., p. 309).
4. The Philadelphia Museum of Art archives also contain documents of restorations done in 1956 and 1974.
5. He was probably already dead by December 17, 1528.
See L. N. Cittadella 1868, p. 57.
6. On the history and vicissitudes of the Leuchtenberg collection, see Miller 1990, pp. 76–82.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

The condition of the painting is good. The canvas is made of two pieces of linen of a single-thread diagonal weave, stitched together horizontally; the thread count is 18–19 per centimeter horizontally and 12 per centimeter vertically. The canvas seems essentially intact: there are no tacking edges visible, although the left edge shows signs of cusping and tacking holes, suggesting that the canvas was tacked to the face of a strainer. Imprints of the original stretcher bars are visible, and although the right edge is tattered, it shows an imprint about 4 centimeters wide (this is also the width of the center vertical reinforcement). The top and bottom edges have imprints 3.5 centimeters wide, so as little as .5 centimeter may be missing from those sides.

The Virgin's red blouse is applied over a white substrate. The partially oxidized green of the curtain is painted over a white or yellow preparation and the trees over a darker blue one. Saint Joseph's cloak and the sleeves of the donor seem to be painted with orpiment-realgar. Saint Joseph's garment has an oxidized copper resinate glaze. The x-

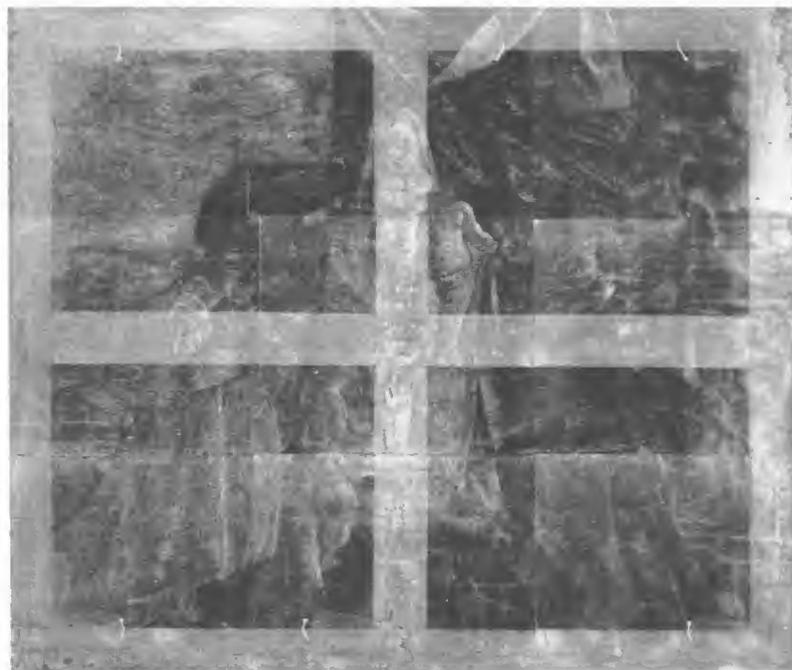


Fig. 109. X-radiograph of the painting showing only minor changes to the composition, uncharacteristic of Dosso's general working method

radiograph shows an overall preparation containing lead white under the paint film.

There are various pentimenti, some of them in the pediment of the column to the right and the wall behind the female donor. Saint Joseph's head may have been farther to the left, and Saint John was added over the Virgin's blue cloak. Some details and techniques seem uncharacteristic for Dosso: the incision marks found on the curtain and elsewhere; the thin paint layer and lack of impasto; and the absence of details such as eyelashes.

(Some information from a Condition Report by Mark Tucker, Philadelphia Museum of Art.)

DOSSO DOSSI (?) OR ANONYMOUS PO VALLEY PAINTER

58. *Madonna and Child in Glory with Five Saints*

*Ca. 1525
Oil on canvas, 86 ½ ×
55 ½ in. (220 × 140 cm)
Arcivescovado
(Archbishop's Palace),
Ferrara*

Provenance
Da Varano chapel, Santa
Maria in Vado, Ferrara
(*ab origine*); sacristy, Santa
Maria in Vado, Ferrara
(from 1933); Arcivescovado
(Archbishop's Palace),
Ferrara (from 1945)

References
Brisighella ca. 1704–10
(1990 ed., pp. 383, 389);
Barotti 1770, pp. 144–45;
Scalabrini 1773, p. 321;
C. Cittadella 1782–83,
vol. 1, p. 139; Frizzi 1787,
p. 143; Avventi 1838,
p. 132; Cavallini 1878,
pp. 271, 485; Reggiani
1908, p. 38; Colagiovanni
1936, p. 28; Arcangeli
1963, p. 73; Frabetti 1972,
pp. 9, 36; Bentini in
Ferrara 1981, p. 115; Volpe
1981, pp. 135–55 (1982
ed., pp. 3–14); Ferretti
1982, pp. 61, 73; Sgarbi
1982, pp. 3–4; Bernardini
in Bologna 1983, p. 125;
Bietti in Bologna 1983,
p. 339; Trevisani in
Rovigo 1984, p. 158;
A. De Marchi 1986,
pp. 20, 24–25; Buzzoni
1988, p. 263; Leone De
Castro 1988, pp. 6–7;
Mazza in Brescia,
Frankfurt 1990,

This altarpiece remained in its original home, the Da Varano chapel of Santa Maria in Vado in Ferrara, until 1933. It entered the literature on Dosso in rather clamorous fashion in 1981, when Carlo Volpe cited it as a key work of the Ferrarese painter's youth, the fundamental link between the much-debated early group assembled by Longhi in 1927 (see entry for cat. no. 56) and Dosso's more characteristic manner. It should be noted at the outset that this proposition was based on a reconstruction of the artist's career rather different from the one generally accepted today: at that time, the Costabili polyptych (cat. no. 6) was placed firmly in the 1520s, and the two predella panels in the Pinacoteca in Ferrara (cat. no. 4) were thought to date to 1519. Within that general framework, Volpe's attribution seemed truly definitive. Volpe even pointed out how in this painting the artist was reinterpreting, although in the twilight light typical of Lombard and Brescian painters, lessons learned from Giorgione and Titian; and how the arrangement of the figures in space, turning toward the apparition above, was a clear reference to Raphael's *Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia* (Pinacoteca, Bologna), which arrived in Bologna about 1515.

However, while those are clearly reference points, the painter did not renounce older, local figurative approaches; indeed, he subverted the hallowed classical canon of Giorgione, Titian, and Raphael into an "anticlassicism." Thus, the angel-musicians grouped around the Virgin echo not Raphael's but those in Ortolano's *Madonna and Child in Glory with Music-Making Angels* (Pinacoteca, Bologna) of about 1515. In an earlier essay (1974), Volpe had explained the Brescian elements in Dosso's work as stemming from the painter's "spiritual friendship" with Moretto da Brescia, but in 1981 he thought they derived as well from works by the Brescian painter Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo from the period of his *Hermit Saints* (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice). In Volpe's opinion, therefore, this altarpiece dated later than the 1515 Raphael *Saint Cecilia* and earlier than the 1519 of Dosso's Ferrara predella panels, and closer to the first date than the second, since the scholar also placed in Dosso's oeuvre after the altarpiece

the *Noah's Ark* (Rhode Island School of Design, Providence), *The Bath* in the Castel Sant'Angelo (cat. no. 55), and the London *Bacchanal* (fig. 2), in that order.

This view was nearly unanimously accepted, with only Trevisani (in Rovigo 1984) dissenting, except for slight differences of opinion on the order and on whether the Brescian similarities resulted more from "parallel mental situations"¹ than actual encounters between artists. Ballarin accepted Volpe's general argument and the painting's iconographical derivation from the *Saint Cecilia* (which he believes arrived in Bologna in the spring of 1514),² and went on to describe the altarpiece as a subtle turning-point work representing the moment when Dosso began to break away from the Venetian manner of Giorgione and Titian and recognize as fundamental to him the artistic culture of the Po valley—"Lombard" and Brescian in a broad sense (thus embracing Savoldo and Moretto). Ballarin thus proposed a date in the second half of 1514 for the altarpiece.

Nobody, however, seems to have noticed the incongruities of this argument. It is highly problematic to presume a connection between Dosso and contemporaneous Brescian culture in 1514,³ 1514–16,⁴ or about 1515–16.⁵ Savoldo almost certainly spent the entire decade after 1510 in Venice rather than Brescia, and Moretto's painting style in 1516 was closely linked to a Milanese tradition associated with the artist Bramantino, as can be seen in the lunette Moretto painted for the church of San Giovanni Evangelista in Brescia that year. In 1518 Moretto painted organ shutters (now in Lovere) that are heavily dependent on the style of Girolamo Romanino; indeed, he did not arrive at his mature style, which we consider typically "Brescian," until about 1520. The paradoxical conclusion is that throughout the second decade of the cinquecento there was no trace in Brescia of those images of diffuse, crepuscular light that are generally labeled "Brescian." In fact, the Madonna in this altarpiece seems to be influenced by Moretto's *Madonna del Carmelo* (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice), which is dated 1520–22,⁶ and there is also a striking similarity between the angle of Saint Matthew's head in the



pp. 270–71; Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 403; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 31, 299–300; Lucco 1994, p. 45; Romani 1996, pp. 90–91

center of the present painting and that of the Carmelite monk's in Moretto's canvas.

Moreover, the crucial rediscovery by Adriano Franceschini of documents of payments made to Dosso and Garofalo for the Costabili polyptych, which link the work to the years 1513–14,⁷ is absolutely detrimental to Volpe's chronological argument. The stylistic incompatibility between the polyptych (cat. no. 6) and the altarpiece of the Arcivescovado is clear enough. Indeed, it used to be generally agreed, with the latter work situated between 1514 and 1516, that the much greater maturity evident in the Costabili polyptych required it to date to about 1530, although Ballarin recently pulled that back to about 1523. For the two works to coexist in the same oeuvre, they must, on the basis of style, be separated by a number of years; by this logic, if the Costabili polyptych is now known to have a documented date of 1513–14, then this *Madonna and Child in Glory*, a painting far more archaic in its approach, must date from about 1506–8. But this argument too leads to an absurdity, because if the work refers to a Raphael of 1514, it obviously cannot date to before that year. The conclusion necessarily to be drawn is that the Arcivescovado altarpiece was not painted by Dosso.

Here it is worthwhile to analyze the early local literature on the painting, especially since Volpe relied on the opinion of Cesare Cittadella (1782–83), who called it "one of Dosso's very first works," to bolster his attribution to Dosso. But did Cittadella somehow have access to a reliable source, unknown both to us today and to other early scholars of the local culture? An attribution to the "school of Dosso Dossi" had already appeared in a manuscript by Carlo Brisighella (ca. 1704–10), and again in Barotti (1770). Scalabrini (1773) called it the work of "Bonifacio Bembo, of Venice" but added that the painter was "believed to be of the Dossi's school." A unanimous early tradition, in short, placed the painting in the Dossian orbit, attributing it either to the school or to a specific name (whether the Venetian Bembo was invented or not is another question) in the school. All Cittadella did was make his own personal suggestion, one neither more nor less well founded than the previous ones. If he had really possessed new, irrefutable information in support of it, he certainly would have made it known, and successive writers would have taken it into account. Instead, the attribution to

"Bonifacio Bembo of Venice, believed to be of the Dossi's school," was perpetuated by Frizzi (1787) (just a few years after Cittadella), Avventi (1838), and Reggiani (1908); whereas Cavallini (1878) and Colagiovanni (1936) made "Bonifacio Bembo" and "school of the Dossi" two distinct possible attributions and did not favor either.

External circumstances led to a period of eclipse of about half a century in the work's critical fortunes; in 1933 the Da Varano chapel in Santa Maria in Vado was turned into a sanctuary for the fallen of World War I, and the altarpiece was moved, first to the sacristy of the same church, and in 1945 to the Arcivescovado. Believed lost by Arcangeli (1963), the painting was later ascribed to Gabriello Cappellini, called il Calzolaretto, by Frabetti (1972); Bentini (1981) further demoted it, attributing it to Giovan Francesco Surchi, il Dielai.

Volpe's discussion of the painting emphasized its importance, prompting its restoration in 1983. The spandrels containing angels, which had been added to the altarpiece by the painter Bastianino later in the century, were detached and then reinstalled so that they could be seen to be separate pieces. Various additions that had transformed the saints' identities were also removed. The saint toward the left, who appeared to be Saint Agatha, lost the salver with her severed breasts and now, for lack of attributes, is no longer identifiable. The female saint to the right lost the forceps holding a tooth that had identified her as Saint Apollonia; with the reemergence, on the ground near her feet, of part of the wheel of her martyrdom, she has returned to her original state as Saint Catherine of Alexandria. The saint at the far right lost the giant keys of Saint Peter, but his typology remains that of Peter, and in pose he is a symmetrical mirror image of Saint Paul, identified by his beard and sword, at the far left. Most likely he was always Saint Peter, even without keys. Cleaning has also at last resolved the question of the identity of the saint in the middle. Volpe, curiously, thought him to be Saint John the Baptist, but in fact he is Saint Matthew, for the inscription "S. MATEUS" has reemerged at his feet. X-rays have revealed some slight revisions, particularly in the position of the Virgin's head, which was almost frontal before being turned clearly to the right as it is today, and in the attitudes of the four saints flanking Matthew. All the saints' halos have disappeared.

Having dismissed the attribution of the altarpiece to Dosso, we might look to what seems the



Fig. 110. Unknown artist, *The Ascension of Christ*. Oil on panels. Location unknown, formerly Count Papafava, Padua



Fig. 111. Attributed to Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo, *Head of a Man*. Black chalk on blue paper. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon

most natural alternative, the painter whose authorship of the majority of the “Longhi group” I have aimed to prove elsewhere in this catalogue (see cat. nos. 56, 57); that is, Sebastiano Filippi of Lendinara. Yet, although there is no lack of similarities between Filippi and the present painter—compare, for example, the foreshortening of the Virgin’s head here with that of Saint Elizabeth’s in the 1525 Lendinara altarpiece (fig. 108), or Saint Paul’s leg, wrapped in his cloak, with that in the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in the Capitoline Museums (fig. 106)—this does not seem to me an entirely acceptable solution. The painter of the Da Varano chapel altarpiece displays a culture more oriented toward the Po valley, reflecting influences from Ferrara, Mantua, and Cremona and much less from Giorgione and Titian, than anything seen in the work of Filippi, who remained loyal to his hybrid identification with both Venice and Ferrara. Moreover, the present painter’s art seems of slightly more modern origin than Filippi’s; while Filippi started working about 1510, this artist’s painting hints at nothing before about 1515. There is no trace in his work of the first, more experimental phase of classicism, only of its more mature, conscious form. It is hardly accidental that when all the

works that have been discussed here were grouped under Dosso’s name, the Da Varano altarpiece seemed to be the connecting link between the earlier “Longhi group” and the Modena altarpiece of 1518–22 (fig. 1). We should also remember that not even the much-emphasized derivation of this work from Raphael’s *Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia* necessarily supports a dating shortly after that authoritative model. Frequent assertions to the contrary, there is no sure indication that Raphael’s work had any immediate repercussions on painting in the Bologna-Emilia region; there seems to have been a lag of about a decade before the first instances of absorption of that canon are encountered.⁸

Thus, since we lack evidence whereby we might convincingly name the author of this painting, I prefer to describe it as an anonymous work. However, I do believe that the same hand is recognizably at work in a small panel, *The Ascension of Christ* (fig. 110), which years ago was in the collection of the counts Papafava in Padua, then bearing an uncertain attribution to Giovanni da Asola. There seems also to be a connection between the head of the evangelist Matthew in the present painting and the fine drawing of a man’s head, usually attributed to Savoldo, in Dijon (fig. 111).⁹

ML

1. A. De Marchi 1986, p. 23.
2. Ballarin, from a 1987 lecture at the University of Bologna published in Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 403, and Ballarin 1994–95, p. 31.
3. Ballarin in Paris 1993, p. 403; Ballarin 1994–95, pp. 31, 299–300.
4. Leone De Castris 1988, pp. 6–7.
5. A. De Marchi 1986, pp. 20, 24–25; Mazza in Brescia, Frankfurt 1990, pp. 270–71.
6. Fiocco 1921, p. 204.
7. Franceschini 1995, pp. 110–15.
8. See Bernardini in Bologna 1983, pp. 121–57. Bernardini's assertions notwithstanding, to me the *Pietà* of Amico Aspertini of 1519 (San Petronio, Bologna) and Ortolano's *Three Saints* (National Gallery, London) seem to have no close relation, iconographic or otherwise, to the *Saint Cecilia*. The first documentable derivation of the Raphael work is the lost altarpiece formerly in San Biagio at Bologna (destroyed in Dresden in 1945), which documents show was commissioned from Girolamo da Treviso the Younger in 1523.
9. Lucco 1994, p. 45.

Chronology

DOCUMENTED DATES IN THE LIFE OF DOSSO DOSSI

1485

Dosso's father, Niccolò di Luteri, is recorded as living in Tramuschio in the province of Mirandola, close to the territory of Mantua. (In 1487 he is again so recorded.) (Franceschini 1995)

1486/87

Probable approximate birthdate of Giovanni Francesco di Luteri (or Lutero), later called Dosso (deduced from document of June 23, 1512).

1512

April 11. Dosso is paid 30 ducats for painting a large picture with eleven figures ("quadrum unum magnum cum undecis figuris humanis") for the palace of San Sebastiano, Mantua (Arco 1857, vol. 2, p. 79; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 85).

June 23. Dosso's name is mentioned in a Mantuan legal document having to do with the acquisition of property; thus, it is likely that by this date he has reached the majority age of 25 (Giovannini 1992, p. 58).

1513

July 11. Dosso "of Mirandola" and Garofalo receive payment for their work on the polyptych commissioned by Antonio Costabili for the high altar of Sant'Andrea in Ferrara (cat. no. 6).

August 6. Dosso and Garofalo are reimbursed for a visit to Venice to buy materials.

November 15 and 21. The two artists receive further interim payments for the Costabili polyptych (Franceschini 1995 for all 1513 information).

1514

March 14. Dosso is recorded as living in the Este castle complex in Ferrara (Franceschini 1995).

June 3. A payment is made from the ducal exchequer for the strainers of three canvases to be painted by Dosso (Franceschini 1995).

June 7 and 14. Dosso is paid for three canvases and for some portraits, which are to be sent to Rome (Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 414; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 99).

1516

March 9. Dosso is paid for going to Venice on Duke Alfonso's business (Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 414; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 113).

1517

November 12–13. Dosso is paid for going to Venice (Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 414) and to Florence (A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 441). Battista is paid for painting masks (A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 441; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 122).

1518

January 5. Dosso is in Modena to sign the contract for an altarpiece for the altar of Saint Sebastian in the cathedral (fig. 1), commissioned by the Mensa Comune dei Preti, or confraternity of priests (Giovannini 1992, p. 57). (Interim payments to Dosso will follow in February and August, and in November 1519 and March 1520.)

May 29. Dosso receives his first payment for work on the newly enlarged Via Coperta. (Further payments, including those to his assistants Tommaso da Carpi and Albertino, will follow in June and October.) The documents mention "la fazada" (the facade) and "li camini" (the chimneypieces); in other words, the work consists of large-scale decoration, probably in fresco (A. Venturi 1892–93, pp. 441–42; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 130).

June 4. Dosso is paid for going to Venice on the duke's business (A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 441; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 131).

1519

January 3 and February 26. Dosso and his assistants are paid for painting moldings for the friezes in the rooms of the Via Coperta ("cornixoti de le camare" of the "via coperta") (Mezzetti 1965a, p. 59; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 138).

May 18. Dosso is reimbursed for a visit to Venice to buy materials for decorating a ducal chapel ("cappella . . . al boschetto") (Antonelli Trenti 1964, p. 415; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 141).

June 4 to August 5. Dosso receives regular payments for his work in the chapel (Mezzetti 1965a, p. 59; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 143).

November. Dosso and Titian visit together the art collection of Isabella d'Este in Mantua (Luzio 1913, p. 218; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 147).

1520

January. A letter from the duke's agent in Rome, Paolucci, mentions the presence of Battista in

Raphael's workshop. Dosso has remained at home in Ferrara (Campori 1863, p. 29; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 152.)

August 17. Dosso and Battista are paid for "quadri per le stantie" (pictures for the ducal apartments in the Via Coperta) (Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, p. 211; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 158).

1521

January 11. Dosso is paid for "quadri per la Camera de la Ill.^{mo} s.n." (pictures for the duke's bedroom) (Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, p. 212; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 163).

March 4. Dosso is paid for painting 109 feet of "cornixotti" (moldings) for the duke's Camerino ("lo Camarino de sua Ex^{tia} in Castello") (Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, pp. 212–13; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 164). *May.* The completed *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece commissioned for Modena Cathedral in 1518 is shipped from Ferrara to Modena; Dosso receives his final payment for the work (Giovannini 1988, pp. 207–9, 222–23; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 126).

1522

June 26 and August 9. Dosso is paid for "quadri per li solari de la Stantie de la Via Coperta" (ceiling paintings in the Via Coperta) (Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, pp. 212–13; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 166).

October 11. Dosso is paid for his work on a number of projects: decoration of the castle chapel; "li quadri al solaro e suxo del Cam. de lo Ill^{mo} s.n." (pictures for the ceiling and below it in the duke's bedroom); three portraits; and other pictures (Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, p. 216; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 178).

December 11. Dosso receives an advance payment for a picture for the castle chapel (Antonelli Trenti 1960–61, pp. 216–17; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 179).

1524

September 3 and December 22. Dosso is paid for painting "uno tondo in lo suffitto della camara del Pozzuollo" (a tondo for the ceiling of the Camera del Poggiolo) (see cat. no. 32).

1526

September 26. Dosso is reimbursed for the expense of ultramarine blue for painting the tondo in the Camera del Poggiolo (for 1524 and 1526 information, A. Venturi 1892–93, pp. 48–49, 442; Mezzetti 1965a, p. 61; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 197, 206).

1527

January 7. Battista, acting in the name of Dosso, signs a contract with the Compagnia della Concezione (Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception) in Modena to paint the altarpiece for its chapel in the cathedral (fig. 9) (Cremonini 1997).

March 1527 is the date given in an inscription formerly mounted below Dosso's Della Salle altarpiece (fig. 76) in Ferrara Cathedral (Baruffaldi 1697–1722 [1844–46 ed., pp. 276–77]; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 223).

1531

September; to June 1532. Dosso and Battista work in the palace of Buonconsiglio, Trent (see figs. 33, 34). *November 23.* The *Immaculate Conception* altarpiece, contracted for in 1527, is officially installed in the cathedral at Modena (Lancellotti 1861–67, vol. 4, p. 114).

1533

December 20. Dosso receives part payments for two altarpieces commissioned by Duke Alfonso: the *Votive Nativity* for the altar of Saint Joseph in Modena Cathedral, and *Saint Michael and the Assumption of the Virgin* for the cathedral of Reggio Emilia (fig. 26).

1534

May, August, December. Further payments are made to Dosso for the two altarpieces commissioned in 1533 (for 1533 and 1534 information, Campori 1880, p. 84; Monducci 1985, pp. 251–53; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. nos. 271, 276, 279).

1536

March 4. Dosso is paid for decorating the chapel and other rooms in the ducal villa of Belriguardo (see fig. 35); further payments follow in the same year (A. Venturi 1892–93, pp. 57–59; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 290).

1537

October 20. Dosso is paid for painting decorations in the ducal villa of Belvedere (A. Venturi 1892–93, p. 60; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 297).

1540

February 28, March 6, March 13. Dosso and Battista are paid for the works *Saint Michael Overcoming Satan* and *Saint George and the Dragon* (cat. no. 43) (A. Venturi 1892–93, pp. 131–32; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 332).

1541

June 23. Dosso and Battista are paid for a journey to Venice to buy materials for painting theater scenery (A. Venturi 1928, p. 983; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 351).

1542

June. A legal document refers to Dosso as deceased (Grigioni 1936, p. 619; Ballarin 1994–95, doc. no. 365).

Appendix

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS ON UNCATALOGUED WORKS

ANDREA ROTHE

Technical remarks are presented here on those paintings by or attributed to Dosso or Battista Dossi that are not catalogued in this book and that were accessible for examination. The discussions appear in alphabetical order according to the cities in which the works are now located.

BATTISTA DOSSI

Allegory of Justice (fig. 11)

Oil on canvas, 204 x 105.5 cm

Gemäldegalerie, Dresden

The painting is in very good condition, but the varnish has yellowed. The canvas may be butt-joined. An imprint of the strainer about 6.5 centimeters wide is visible at the top left and right, indicating that the top of the painting has not been cut. Although the bottom lacks such an imprint, it is probably intact, since the placement of the figure's feet is identical to that in the pendant *Allegory of Peace* (see below). On the face are neither eyelashes nor eyebrows, but the little red dot is present in the corner of both eyes; there are pronounced fingernails. The landscape includes Battista's unmistakable trees, with small highlights, and buildings composed of vertical brushstrokes which are based on prototypes by Dosso but are not as distinctive. As is the case in other works by Battista, the tassels and the rich decoration are very carefully painted in great detail, and the hand holding the scales has a basketlike configuration.

BATTISTA DOSSI

Allegory of Peace (fig. 66)

Oil on canvas, 211 x 109 cm

Gemäldegalerie, Dresden

The condition of the painting is very good, but the varnish has yellowed, and there are areas of concentric crackle pattern. While the cornucopia contains flower types found in Dosso's *Allegory with Pan* (cat. no. 38) and *Allegory of Fortune* (cat. no. 41), here, tellingly, the arrangement of the flowers is uninspired. The painting of the garment's border is overly descriptive; however, the lamb and the wolf are beautifully painted.

DOSSO DOSSI

Madonna in Glory with Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist

Oil on panel transferred to canvas, 161 x 119 cm
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

The condition is only fair: the painting was transferred to canvas probably after 1913 (the year it came to the Uffizi) but was reapplied to a solid support during a recent restoration. The transfer flattened and damaged the paint surface, and there are many areas of paint loss, especially near the bottom edge. The landscape area, however, is in very good condition. During the recent restoration it was noted that the original dark imprimatura had been thinned or totally removed during the transfer; thus, the current light preparation of lead white is relatively new. Fingerprints or handprints were found over the entire surface: the dress of the Madonna, painted with a red lake, shows the faint but clear signs of dabbing with fingers or a cloth. An area in the lower part of her mantle reveals clear handprints or fingerprints on the white substrate, which is probably of lead white. The green garment of Saint John the Evangelist was also painted on a white substrate and shows signs of dabbing with fingers or a cloth, as does the cloak of Saint John the Baptist. Other areas of dabbing can be found on the elbow of the Baptist; on his scroll, between the letters E and D; in the first white cloud on the left at the bottom of the nimbus; and, extensively, on the central cloud above the putti on the right.

There are many pentimenti, which show changes to: the placement of John the Evangelist's hand; the trees in the landscape; the gray cloud under the nimbus; the Baptist's scroll, later covered by a staff; and the position of the Baptist's arm. Brush drawing, sometimes in dark brownish red, sometimes in black, is visible in the arm, the shoulder, and especially the hand of the Baptist.

DOSSO DOSSI

Saint John the Baptist (fig. 66)

Oil on panel, 72 x 56 cm

Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Galleria Palatina

The painting is not in a good state of preservation and has had a serious flaking problem. It was restored in 1964 (the inscription on the scroll is original). The blue sky and the saint are painted on top of a white preparation which, rather unusually, is covered with finger- or handprints, particularly in the background scene on the right showing the Baptism. The nose, mouth, and chin of the saint also carry some pronounced imprints. (Imprints hardly appear in the presumed pendant, *Saint George*, cat. no. 8.) The eyebrows, beard, and fingernails are very detailed. The thick impasto highlights, especially on the richly embroidered gold collar with its little tassels, were probably painted in an emulsion of oil and egg tempera.

ATTRIBUTED TO DOSSO DOSSI

Portrait of a Man with Five Rings

Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 58.5 cm

Hampton Court, Royal Collection

The condition of the work is fair. It is covered with a dark yellow varnish and has suffered from aggressive cleanings in the past. There is a tear in the canvas at the sitter's right shoulder and some abrasion in the area of his neck and left shoulder. When the painting was restored in 1893, it was somewhat flattened in the lining of the canvas and was mounted on a slightly larger stretcher; at that time the green curtain behind the sitter was revealed. The imprint of the original strainer is visible at about 3 centimeters from the top and bottom edges, indicating that about 3 centimeters are missing at each. No imprints are visible on the two sides. Unfortunately, as is often the case, the tacking edges have been cut on all four sides, so it is difficult to be sure how much is missing.

There is the typical red dot in the corner of the eye, but no eyelashes or eyebrow hairs. No fingerprints are visible, but an area of the green background shows the faint imprint of a fine cloth. The picture is painted very thinly, which is highly uncharacteristic of Dosso's work.

DOSDO DOSSI

Saint William of Aquitaine

Oil on canvas, 84.5 x 73.2 cm

Hampton Court, Royal Collection

The condition of the painting is fair to good: it was somewhat flattened by a nineteenth-century lining of the canvas, and some details are abraded. The general softness in appearance of areas such as the hands

may be a result of the painting's condition. Imprints of the original strainer 3.5 centimeters wide are visible at the right and bottom edges, with a similar light mark at about 3 centimeters from the top. No strainer mark is visible at the left. The tacking edges have been cut off on all four sides. Thus, the painting was originally somewhat larger. Very light cloth imprints are visible on the areas of green, which are worn (the yellow substrate beneath is visible). The yellow ribbons in the cape are painted with many sharp, scumbled highlights, an effect generally achieved with an aqueous emulsion. Since the x-radiograph image is barely visible, the preparation must be, atypically, devoid of lead white; and the paint film is very thin.

DOSDO DOSSI

The Adoration of the Magi (fig. 7)

Walnut oil on panel (White and Pilc 1995,

pp. 88–89), 84 x 107 cm

National Gallery, London

The painting was cleaned in the 1970s and its condition is good, although there were horizontal cracks (now repaired), and the darker areas are difficult to read. The red garment of the kneeling king is painted over a light-colored substrate (presumably lead white and vermilion) and shows signs of dabbing with a fine cloth. The dark yellow cloak of Saint Joseph is painted with orpiment. The green shirt of the standing king and the lining of the Virgin's cloak are painted in transparent green over a yellow preparation of high lead content, probably lead-tin yellow. The yellow cloak of the kneeling king is probably also lead-tin yellow. The outlines are scumbled and not well defined.

Among the many interesting pentimenti, one shows that the standing king originally looked to the right. A fingerprint in the area of the moon shows up in the x-radiograph. The halos differ from others in Dosso's paintings: the Madonna's halo is made to resemble a three-dimensional disk; the Child's, which sits askew on his head, has the appearance of fine goldsmith's work; and Saint Joseph's is a simple circle.

ATTRIBUTED TO DOSDO DOSSI

A Bacchanal (fig. 2)

Oil on canvas, 142 x 170 cm

National Gallery, London

The painting is in only fair condition: some areas are heavily repainted, with a particularly large patch of repainting in the sky. The canvas has a thread count

of 13–18 per centimeter for the warp and 12–15 per centimeter for the weft. The paint layer is very thin, as the x-radiograph, in which the image is barely visible, confirms. However, there are areas of denser material, perhaps relining adhesive, which was applied with a spatula. Visible similarities to *The Bath* (cat. no. 55) suggest that it would be fruitful to compare x-radiographs of the two paintings.

Dosso Dossi

Saint Sebastian (fig. 8)

Oil on panel, 182 x 95 cm

Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

The painting's condition is generally good, although the paint layer has darkened and the varnish layer lacks transparency, hindering visibility. The wrinkled surface (not unlike that of the altarpiece in the Duomo in Modena) indicates the presence of pentimenti and the use of a slow-drying oil, probably walnut oil. There is a dark gray preparation under most of the painting. The saint's green cloak, which is painted over a white substrate, is quite oxidized. In an area of the midriff the green is better preserved and it is possible to see some fingerprints, indicating that the pigment is verdigris. The green leaves on the tree, on the other hand, seem glazed with a copper resinate that has darkened and has suffered some abrasion. The darker areas of the landscape are not abraded, although there appears to be glaze lost around the trees, where the dark blue substrate is visible. Details typical of the painter include a light red dot at the corner of the eye, carefully executed finger- and toenails, and a highly detailed helmet and arrows on the ground.

Dosso Dossi

Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints John the Baptist, Sebastian, and Jerome

(the *Saint Sebastian* altarpiece) (fig. 1)

Oil on panel, ca. 367 x ca. 190 cm

Duomo, Modena

The condition of the painting, which was restored in 1995, is good. There are areas of severe paint shrinkage, probably indicating the use of a slow-drying oil, such as walnut oil. The wood grain runs horizontally across the panels. Beneath the lower half of the painting, and particularly visible around Saint Sebastian's feet, is a dark gray preparation. Behind the sky, however, a light-colored preparation is used to give maximum effect to the radiant nimbus of the Madonna. Saint Jerome's robe is painted

on a white substrate; Saint John's robe is of orpiment.

There are fingerprints in various areas all across the painting, and markedly so on the leg of Saint Sebastian. There are also many imprints on the edges, an indication that the paint film was probably still soft when the panel was moved to the Duomo and installed. Signs of dabbing with a cloth can be found on Saint Sebastian's dark green sash (painted over a lead-tin yellow substrate), but because of the overall shriveling of the paint film it is difficult to distinguish dabbing from fingerprints. The trees behind Saint Jerome's shoulder are noteworthy because they have not been damaged by cleaning and maintain their glazing (so often lost) in the shadows. The tassels and many other particulars are painted in high relief, perhaps with an egg-oil emulsion. There are numerous pentimenti, including in Saint Sebastian's loincloth, which originally protruded to the left, and in Saint John's banderole, which continued farther down his staff; there are also changes in his figure and the position of his arm. The shrinkage of the pigment of Saint Jerome's cloak confirms the presence of pentimenti there as well. The restorer reported that the angels were painted in full figure and then covered with clouds.

Dosso Dossi

Virgin and Child in Glory with Saints George and Michael (fig. 6)

Oil on panel, 283 x 177 cm

Galleria Estense, Modena

The painting is in fair condition, with many vertical losses caused by the contraction of the panel. The work has been transferred from panel to panel, and the arched top has been truncated. A more recent restoration included a good deal of retouching in *tratteggio* (parallel vertical strokes). The preparatory layer seems to be dark gray. Both the Madonna's red cloak and Saint Michael's red sash have been dabbed with a fine cloth. The red is painted over a white substrate, while the green of Saint George's garment is over a yellow substrate. Saint Michael's billowing cloak is probably painted in orpiment, which includes particles of realgar. Typical details include: pronounced eyelashes and brows, red dots at the corner of eyes, and detailed finger- and toenails. There is a pentimento in the sickle moon.

DOSSO AND BATTISTA DOSSI

Votive Nativity with God the Father

Oil on panel, 243 x 165 cm

Galleria Estense, Modena

The painting, which was restored in 1997, is in very good condition. There seems to be a dark gray preparation under most of the painting, but not under the light aura behind God the Father. Various greens have been used. In the cloaks they are dark and intense and have not darkened, indicating the use of verdigris, while the landscape contains green glazes that have turned brown, which points to use of a copper resinate.

The landscape buildings clearly show the vertical brushstrokes that are typical of both Battista's and Dosso's painted views. The blue that one would expect behind the trees in a Dosso painting is not visible here. None of the figures have eyelashes or eyebrows, and there are only cursory details in the hair and beards; however, there is a red dot in the corner of some eyes. The hands have the somewhat formless, basketlike quality common to hands in Battista's paintings.

A number of pentimenti are visible. The billowing garment of God shows changes, as does the arm of the angel holding the crown. Another revision appears behind the Virgin, and a broken architrave shows through in the foreground.

DOSSO OR BATTISTA DOSSI

Madonna and Child with Saints Sebastian and George

Oil on panel, 194 x 171 cm

Galleria Estense, Modena

The painting is in good condition, although the Madonna's cloak shows severe shrinkage crackle. Most of the painting is over a black or dark gray preparation, which shows through on the right under Saint George's yellow cloak. However, there may be a light-colored preparation under the Madonna and Child. The blue of the Madonna's cloak is painted in azurite mixed with lead white, while Saint George's yellow cloak has been identified as a mixture of red earth (an iron-rich pigment) and orpiment. (Pigment analyses are in the 1996 reports by G. F. Guidi and C. Seccaroni of ENEA and P. Moioli of INN-TEC.) Quite a few fingerprints can be found on the surface of the painting, for instance on Saint George's cloak, the Madonna's cloak, and Saint Sebastian's body. Various pentimenti are visible to the naked eye; an x-radiograph would probably reveal others under the figures of the saints. Details typical of the Dossi include the depiction of toenails and fingernails and the red dot in the corner of eyes.

BATTISTA DOSSI

Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Bernardino Worshiped by Members of the Confraternity of S. Maria della Neve

Oil on panel, 182 x 130 cm

Galleria Estense, Modena

The painting is in very good condition, although the arched top of the panel has been cut by about 26 centimeters. It appears that a dark preparation was used beneath the lower part of the painting up through the landscape, while the preparation beneath the Madonna and saints is white. As in many of Dosso's paintings, the trees are painted over a light blue background. Shaded areas, painted with a soluble copper resinate or a thin oil glaze, have been removed, exposing the blue. It is quite likely that a tempera emulsion was used for the sharp highlights. Orpiment was found in the red drape of one of the women in the background. The green cloak of the woman on the right is a copper-based color painted over lead white, while the cloaks of two other women were determined to be azurite with lead white. (Pigment analyses are in the 1996 reports by G. F. Guidi and C. Seccaroni of ENEA and P. Moioli of INN-TEC.)

Many areas of the panel are covered with fingerprints. The quality of execution of the faces of members of the confraternity shows considerable variation. As is typical for Battista's work, the x-radiograph does not reveal any radical changes. There are corrections on some of the faces, and some minor changes in the landscape. The only revisions of any significance were made to the two larger figures of saints above. It is worth noting that the figure of Saint Bernardino on the right is similar to the one discovered in the x-radiograph of the Vienna *Saint Jerome* (cat. no. 20).

BATTISTA AND DOSSO DOSSI

Saint Michael and the Assumption of the Virgin (fig. 26)

Oil on panel, 243 x 166.7 cm

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Parma

The painting is in very good condition. It is built up of panels glued at horizontal seams; it has no frame. A thick, streaky, dark gray preparation was applied horizontally over a light ground. Areas finished in red lake are layered over a white preparation (probably lead white), as are blues. Orpiment may have been used in the shaded areas of Saint Michael's

cuirass. Some areas show fingerprints, while others have smudges that could be cloth dabbings or fingerprints. Some features of the painting are more typical of Dosso, others of Battista. The detailed hairs in the devil's face are rather convincingly Dossesque, as are the flowing cape and feathers and the soft contours of both saint and devil. However, the hands of the Virgin are formless and have the basketlike quality of hands in many paintings by Battista, and the overly detailed landscape and rather generic features of the apostles are also more characteristic of his work. X-radiographs would reveal some interesting pentimenti, which now can be glimpsed through the pronounced shrinkage crackle, especially in the group of apostles.

Dosso Dossi

Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark
Oil on canvas, 106 x 112 cm
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence

The painting's condition is only fair: there are large areas of paint loss, the worst extending from the bottom right corner up to the figure of a woman playing a lute. The thread count of the canvas is 14 per centimeter vertically and 15–16 per centimeter horizontally; there is a sewn horizontal seam. A dark gray preparation underlies the entire painting. The dress of the woman carrying a baby is of orpiment. The red garment of the child in the foreground and the sleeve of the woman in the back are both painted on a white substrate and seem to have signs of dabbing. In the better-preserved areas, the fine points of the painting, such as details of the animals, are magnificent.

Dosso Dossi

Gyges and Candaules
Oil on canvas, 41.5 x 54 cm
Galleria Borghese, Rome

The condition of the painting is fair, with heavy retouching which has discolored in some places. The canvas is a plain weave with 14–15 threads per

centimeter horizontally and 15–16 per centimeter vertically. No imprint of a strainer is evident, but pronounced cusping occurs all around, with some tack holes on the left and right edges. There is a 1.5 centimeter addition on the right. The preparatory layer is mostly dark brown. Part of the queen's dark yellow cloak, which is much discolored and damaged, is probably painted with orpiment. Candaules' cloak is painted in intense green on a yellow substrate; his blue sleeves are azurite. Infrared reveals a very clear preparatory sketch done in rapid strokes of black with a wide brush (fig. 57). The underdrawing is more extensive than that in other paintings by Dosso that have been examined (see Anna Coliva's essay, pp. 75, 78). The only change revealed in the x-radiograph is to the facial profiles of Gyges and the queen; both originally had forehead and nose joined in a straight line.

(Some information drawn from the Condition Report by M. Cardinali, M. B. De Ruggieri, and C. Falcucci, of EMMEBICI, Rome.)

ATTRIBUTED TO DOSSO DOSSI

Saint Catherine
Oil on canvas, 70 x 70 cm
Galleria Borghese, Rome

The condition of the painting is very good, although abrasion has affected some delicately painted areas, such as the arch of the eyebrows. The canvas is a plain weave with 22–25 threads per centimeter horizontally and 21–22 per centimeter vertically. A dark preparation is particularly evident under the face. In the x-radiograph (fig. 55), the face shows as a very compact and defined area painted with lead white, and some important details appear, such as the carefully modeled fingernails. A few minor changes can be seen in the x-radiograph: the eyes were originally more downcast, the ribbon in the hair in a different position, and the proper left eye more pronounced. Some characteristics of this work, among them the flesh tones and the finish, seem typical of Dosso's late work. The painting should be compared with the *Sibyl* (cat. no. 31), which is not as well preserved.

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